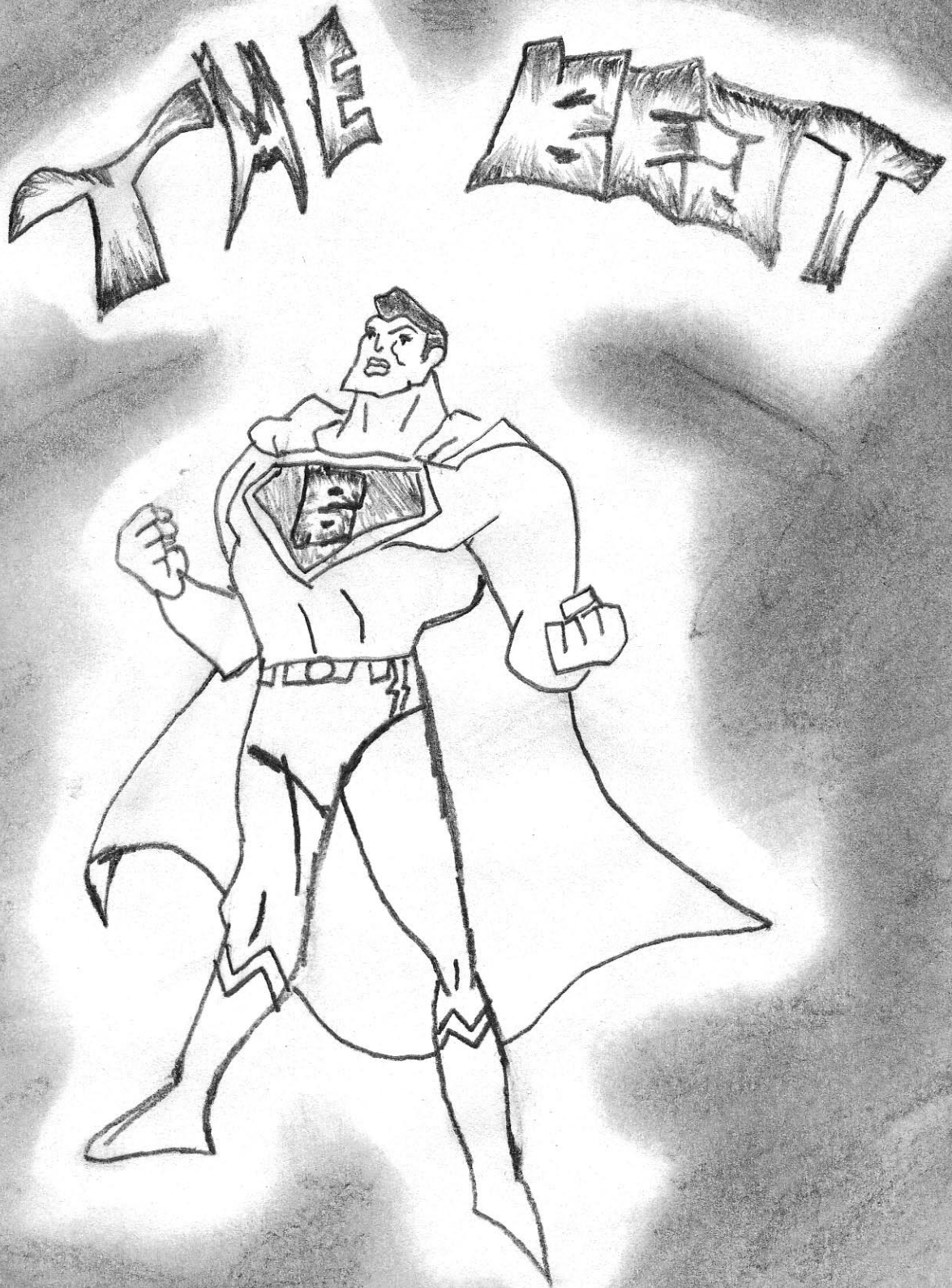


The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.49



How can it be that you are holding in your hands the last issue of The Beat Within for this year? It seems impossible that 2008 is almost finished, and more impossible still that once again, we have managed to publish a magazine of your voices 49 out of 52 times this year, one every week except for the week of July 4th and the two weeks still to come — Christmas and New Year's. Sometimes, when we look around at our very old printers and our very young typists, we don't know how we do it. But then we look at you, going through so much in your young lives both in the hall and outside, and our pride swells for you. As we've said over and over, it's you writers and your willingness to share your lives on our pages that make The Beat happen, and makes it the vital, unique and powerful publication that it is, year after year.

And this year has been no exception. Like all years, it has been filled with both good and bad, just as each of our lives are filled with both highs and lows.

Some of the highs for us have been how far and wide The Beat has spread. As this editor writes this note on a cold and rainy morning, our Director is once again in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., making The Beat a true national publication. (While that city prepares for next month's presidential inauguration, The Beat was inaugurated there earlier this year.) In California, alone, 2008 has brought The Beat into Monterey County, Solano County and Fresno County, with other counties asking for it while we try to find the money it takes to continue to expand.

The Beat is even being read in other countries as far away as Asia. This editor recently returned from a trip to Malaysian Borneo (where he was a teacher more than forty years ago!), and when speaking about The Beat, his former students (including some who are now doctors, lawyers and teachers) clicked on their computers to read what you have written. What they read shocked them because their view of America comes from television, which almost never reveals what you reveal every single week, and that is the raw, often painful reality of your daily lives. "Is this really true," they would ask. "Do you really put children into jail?" Sadly, I had to tell them that every word they read in The Beat comes out of someone's personal experience. That is why we call you teachers, and that is what makes The Beat something very special, something we all can be so proud of.

Of course, like we said, this has been a year of both highs and lows. Among the lows is the six-year war in Iraq that has cost America more than 4,000 of its young soldiers, and cost the Iraqis a hundred times as many, or more!

For us, the lowest of the lows is the number of homicides that continue to plague our communities. By the beginning of December, San Francisco had experienced 98 homicides, Oakland 119, San Jose 30 and Richmond 27. Each one of these 274 murders (not counting Fresno, Solano, and so many more) represents a personal tragedy for a mother whose son will never become a man, for a brother who has lost the family member who cared most for him, for a girl who was just beginning to discover the meaning of love and now must discover the meaning of grief, for the child who will never know his father, his uncle, his brother, or his sister. The pain these survivors experience is not worse for some than for others. No one of these young victims was worth less than any other. Taken together, they represent an ongoing national emergency — a failure of leadership from the top and a failure of responsibility from the bottom. This is not YOUR failure, but OURS, all of ours. There are fewer and fewer jobs to be had in areas that actual produce value, like housing, manufacturing and providing resources of all kinds. But there are more and more jobs to be had in areas that limit human freedom, like prison guards, border control officers, and police. There is something upside-down about this picture, and it is all of our responsibility to turn things right side up!

But 2008 has also given us a huge boost of hope that things can change, and change for the better. In November, against all odds, and overcoming the predictions of all

those who said it could never happen, a young and extremely intelligent, a very thoughtful and handsome family man was elected our new President. What makes his election such a high point of the year is the fact that he overcame one of the most degrading examples of national ignorance, and one of the worst aspects of our nation's history, and that is the legacy of racism. This young man, Barack Obama, became the first Black man ever to be elected President of the United States, marking a turning point, a sign that we can overcome the limitations of our past, that we can move beyond ignorance and hate, and that what seemed impossible yesterday has become reality today. We hope that each of you takes some inspiration from his personal triumph, and the triumph this represents to the nation and the world. We know that we are inspired to strive to overcome our own limitations, to move beyond our own petty jealousies and personal problems, and to see the world and the nation in a new way. His election by a majority of white people as well as black people, Latinos as well as Asians, has given us a newfound pride in ourselves, and what we can achieve. We hope it has inspired you in the same way.

So, good-bye 2008. Let 2009 move us into an even brighter future. Let it be the year that all of us — both you and we — look deep inside ourselves and decide, in the words President-elect Barack Obama spoke so often as he made his improbable way to the highest office in the land, "Yes, we can!"

Before leaving this last Editor's Note of 2008, these are the topics that our fine writers have covered in this issue. First, we asked our Beat writers to 'Return To Yesterday' - We always read in The Beat, how many of you have no regrets for the choices you made, as well as your longing to a time of innocence, when life was a bit easier, or so it seemed. This week we want you to tell us if you were given a chance to return to any previous point in your life and change a decision/action you made, but you would lose everything that has happened to you since then, would you do it and why? Is there a time you would return to? If so, please describe. Also, would you like to hold onto the memory of the life you are giving up, even though you could never recapture it? Tell us your thoughts. Tell us what decision or action you would like to change, and also why you would hold on to the memories of the life you are giving up.

The second topic is titled, 'Better Recognize' - There are many people who do great things in our family and communities, but go unnoticed, or with very little recognition, particularly when they are alive. We know you writers have met and know plenty of good people, so we want you to take this time to tell us readers who needs to be recognized for their great work, that has touched you, impacted you, or maybe hasn't affected you, but you simply recognize the good he/she brings to the world. This week spit the truth of a living soul who deserves some high praise from you.

And finally, we were inspired by "West Side Storey" to ask Beat writers to wonder if 'There's a place for me' - In the musical, "West Side Story" there is a song two lovers sing that begins, "There's a place for us, somewhere a place for us, peace and quiet and open air, wait for us, somewhere." Can you imagine a place for you of "peace and quiet and open air?" Do such places exist in reality, or only in the imagination? If you could create such a place, what would it look like? How would "peace and quiet" be maintained? Who would you want to share such a place with? Even if it's only somewhere created in your own mind, can you describe for The Beat your place of "peace and quiet and open air" with as many details as possible. Give us the who, what, why and where...

And now we leave 2008 behind, and thank all of you for the gift of your words. We leave you with our hopes that 2009 will bring each of you more highs than lows, and bring us yet another great year for The Beat Within. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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www.thebeatwithin.org
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The Beat Without 42



Greetings From Miami, The Introduction

What comes to mind when you think of Miami...Beaches? Palm trees? Celebrities? There is so much more to this city than what you might see at first glimpse. In fact, it is a city where many cultures come together and where young people are bright, sophisticated individuals.

We are proud of our heritages and cultures here in Juvenile Detention. We are proud to have a voice to add to the Beat Within. And most of all, we are honored to have the chance to express ourselves. It is by doing so that we can shape our experiences and regain some control over our destinies. For many of us in Miami, Detention is but one chapter in a book that has yet to be written; although it is part of us, it will not define us.

You should know that the Beat Within is widely read and enjoyed here. Now we want to give back. We hope you will enjoy reading what we have to offer, and expect more to come as this project takes off.

On behalf of our young men and women of Miami...

-Eddy A., mental health intern

From The Beat: Check it out, we have new friends in the Miami-Dade, Florida Juvenile Detention Center who want to contribute their art and ideas with us readers. We are honored to open our door. A big shout out to the mental health department for getting this off the ground. We hope this is only the beginning!

*I want to start being smart
with choices I choose.*

*Being the person I am got my
family confused.*

Time is Ticking

Time is ticking, the world is spinning. What are you thinking?

Death comes faster than blinking
But we're still smoking and drinking.
Time is flying, people are still starving.
Children still crying.

I gotta start applying my mind to trying
And finding the real grinding.
Like building back up the projects -
So many friends die.

I ask god if I'm next.

I want to start being smart with choices I choose.

Being the person I am got my family confused.

They think they might lose me

On the streets or six feet deep.

That's why when I'm locked up I weep.

Knowing the love of my family is never cheap.

To losing my freedom - which I really wanted to keep.

When I die, don't cry because I'm asleep.

Keep your head up, stay strong

Cuz you're you and I'm me.

-Zaccheus

From The Beat: Time spins faster when you're not in control. Do your family and yourself the greatest favor of all: Follow your own advice.

Valuable

More valuable than money, silver or gold.

I'm speaking of a woman that is in touch with her soul.

And in touch with her emotions.

Even though she's more beautiful than the skies and oceans,

she knows this yet I never see her bragging or boasting.

She is glamorous, anonymous - I cherish every second of her time.

Because this woman is one of a kind.

Search all around the world and you'll never find a female like mine.

What she talks about, how she uplifts a spirit --

Her voice is like soft music. You can hear it clear when you're near it.

My heart is her treasure chest and she has placed diamonds, pearls and

rubies on it. These are priceless.

She should change her name to precious cuz the time we spend is timeless.

There's only one of her, so unique, valuable, precious, and sweet.

-Zaccheus

From The Beat: It is clear that you have found someone one of a kind. What you admire in her we hope you can also identify within yourself.



Justice

Sometimes in life we have a choice to be free or choose to see.

The choice is yours to make but only you can decide if you want to live or die.

You keep asking me why but what can I say?

Cry? Shed a tear? That means you have fear.

Life ain't easy, so don't try to make it pleasing.

It's going to be hard no matter how far apart you are.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Ryan, this is a very thoughtful piece and you touched on a lot of things that people feel in detention. What would you say to someone who asked you the same things...How would you make the choice to be free? When would it be ok to show that you have fear? What can you do to make life even a little bit easier?

"F" Men Isn't Fair

I say "f" men isn't fair because I'm not like that. I was taught responsibility and I was taught to be respectful to women, at least the one I'm with. Don't get me wrong, I still respect women. I'm sorry for what happened to your sister and your brother's ex, but like I said I ain't like that. I understand what you're saying but like I said earlier I was taught responsibility and respect.

If I get a girl pregnant 1st of all it's not just gonna be any girl, it's gonna be the girl I'm with. 2nd of all we have to be old enough and 3rd of all she has to want kids and I have to want kids.

Sometimes things happen y'know-I don't drink and I don't smoke weed or do other drugs. So if I'm with her she wouldn't have to worry about that. 4th—I'm faithful, so if I'm with one person—I'm only with that person.

I also understand what you're saying because my father left when I was two, and it is hard-especially for my Mom because she had to raise me from two up, and she couldn't really do a good job with that 'cause she had to work all the time.

But right now my Mom just had a baby with the one she loves and I don't have to worry because I think my Dad's faithful (as far as I know).

I just wanted to let you know that some men, not all, but some actually do care.

-Lil' J, Solano

From The Beat: We like the fact that something you read in the Beat made you think about it enough that you were moved to respond. And what you have responded is important, and true. Not all men are the same, and not all women are the same. Though we may be hurt, we cut ourselves off from the force of life if we close ourselves up from relationships and love. Sometimes it takes awhile to get past the anger and the pain, but it's important to live life—and love is definitely key. Thanks for being a good guy, respectful of women, with the integrity to say so.

Born And Raised In The "Ghetto"

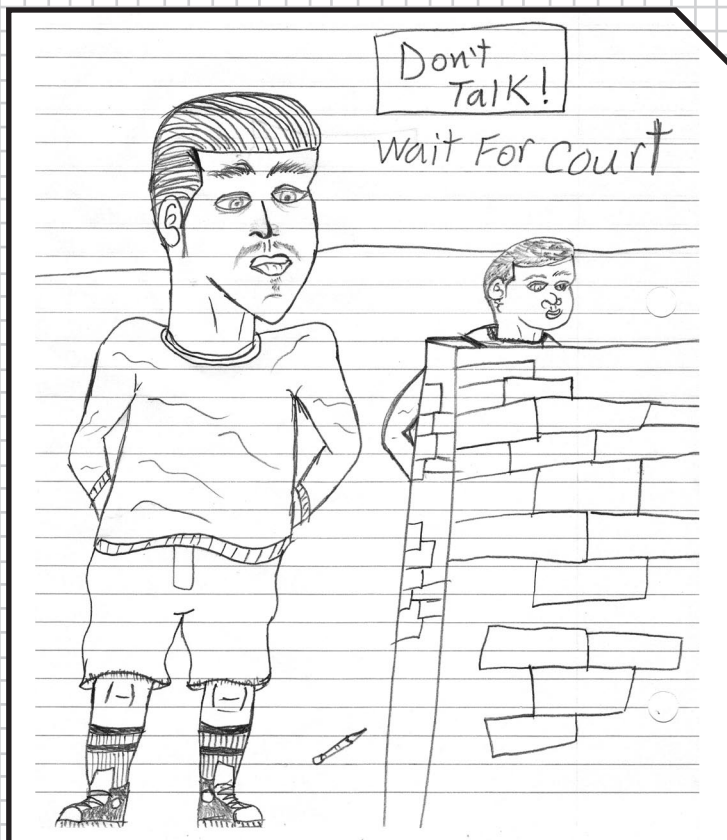
I was born and raised on the streets. When I was six going on seven, I started hanging in the 'hood. I really didn't have anyone to look up to, so I started hanging with people that gangbang. So when I was eight years old I got jumped into the game. So I was gang banging since I was eight years old.

But I want to change my life around 'cause it's not cool to be in the game. You can get shot or killed just because you from another projects. So my advice to all y'all people in the game that wants to get out, get out now while you are young. For me I'm still in the game and I might get out of the game soon. So I hit you up next time.

-H Potter, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with your conclusion that being in the game is "not cool," and with your advice to "get out now while you are young." What we can't understand, though, is why you would delay doing what you know is the right thing to do. You say you "might get out of the game," but how many chances do you think you have? It just takes one mistake to find that it's too late. We know too many young men confined to wheelchairs or to long years in prison who spend their days wishing "If only..." Don't become one of them!

I want to do is start my new life with nothing that has to do with my past.



Giving Up My Past For My Future

Well Beat, want to start off with something that's on the tip of my head. Well Beat, I want to start off with...

Well damn, there this girl that I love but I don't want her back in my life. All she does is causes me to stress and think about what I really want. Seems to me everyone tells me I got to change my ways, to change and not go back to the life I lived because I don't want drugs nor alcohol because I can say that I feel good sober.

I'm not trying to blame this all on my girl, but she does all that while I'm with her. She says she don't see why she got to sacrifice more. She chills with her ninjas that try and holler at her and she knows they trying to, and that pisses me off that she still goes to party with them. I want her to have fun, but not with them. I don't like them and she goes and does that.

She says she loves me, but I ask myself what does love mean to her? I've done so much to change my life for us to be happy till we die, but somehow she's it for me. But that's not all I want from her. I want a sacrifice from her, but it seems to me that she ain't gonna do that for me. So what I want to do is start my new life with nothing that has to do with my past. So if I wanna change and wanna do best for myself, I got to start with my girl and let her go for good because I got to look out for myself and do what's best for my life and for my future family. I got to put my old friends to the side, so that's what's on my mind. Later Beat.

-Flea, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You know, Flea, this is one of the most mature pieces we've ever published in The Beat. Yes, as hard as it must be to give up someone you love, you have to love yourself more. If she is not willing to sacrifice for you, that means her love is thin, and not worth your sacrifices. And, in truth, you cannot sacrifice your sobriety or willingness to create a decent future and family for anything or anyone! As you move from the life you've led into a new life, we are certain you will find real love and will have no doubt that you made the right choice. Thank you for this. We are proud of you!

I Wonder Why Things Like This Happen

Sometimes I wanna cry but the tears just won't fall
so I continue to stand my ground and continue to stand tall

I got too much pain, anger and misery
an' I continue to wonder is there a heaven for G
'cause down here homie we livin' up in hell
will I make it to see 25, only time will tell
the conclusion keeps ringin' like a bell but I don't like that destination

so I continue to strive and box up my frustration
ain't no limitations 'cause life is what you make it worth
I know the way I live I might end up in a hearse
but the cholo in me that's why I keep comin' back
I can't stop this lifestyle so I don't focus on them fake cats

times have changed, time to bring in the new
an' forget those who oppose an' who try to downgrade you
me and my crew try to focus on the positive
but these fools still continue to go snitch
life's a trick an' then you die
prayin' for better days, that's why I look up in the sky
you can look into my eyes an' see no change
stay solid wherever I go so I stay the same
military warfare, concrete jungle
stay on balance, can never fumble
or stumble 'cause I'll carry the weight
had to step my game up, step up to the plate
I wonder who gonna miss me when I die, who gonna look up in the sky
who gonna continue to ride, who gonna wipe my kids' eyes

don't cry baby boy an' princess, you always gonna be daddy's lil' girl
two true angels to this cold

your mom an' me don't get along but it's ya'll that I want
I'll walk many miles an' eliminate any funk
but be good for your tia 'cause your momma not fit
an' don't worry 'bout daddy 'cause I'll be home in a lil' bit
to hold you close in my arms an' rock you to sleep
an' give you a step mom who goin' to love you as much as me
te amo hijos an' me novia Jasmine
an' I wonder why things like this happen

- Lil' Savage, Alameda

From The Beat: You are carrying a lot of weight, Lil' savage. We also see a lot of strength in this piece (as well as in the pieces you write that are all about strength). You don't have to box up your frustrations, there are safe places to put them, like on paper, as you are so good at doing. You don't even have to show anyone. Just get them out. And within all this weight and strength you show such deep love and hope. You've got more choices than you may think.

The Pass

A day I would return to would be the day I dropped the touchdown pass in the Mission San Jose game. If I would've caught that pass, it would've been the greatest catch of my high school football career. Even though the ball seemed uncatchable to most, I am known for catching impossible passes. I still regret losing my focus on the ball.

But since then, I have gotten better and I would never drop another of those passes again. You have to live life first before it can turn into the past and past is made to learn from.

- Shaeville, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a great piece, Shaeville! You turned a story we can all relate to (the best of us miss catches!) into a life-lesson (the past is there to learn from).

Running

At different times in my life I've ran,
ran from the law,
ran from my parents,
ran from my problems, and ran from life in general.
It was easier to run then to face life.
I hated life and every thing life stood for, and little did I know
my life was coming to an end.
I ran and ran for so long
I had no idea what it was like to stop and just deal with life.

The only thing that kept me sane
was my dope, and even then it only lasted so long.
Then one day I got tired of running,
I just couldn't take it any more.

Like some I wanted the easy way out,
so I broke my beer bottle and rammed it in my wrist.
I remember running behind some trash cans,
so no-one would find me, and as I watched my life's blood drain
from my body I knew my running had finally came to an end
and what a better way to go but with the trash that I felt I was.

I woke a day later in a bed, and they said they found my body
by the trash cans. From that day on I knew I wasn't trash,
no matter what anyone said, and from that day on
I decided to change and stop running. And I did.

- P. Land Of Enchantment, NewMexico

From The Beat: We at the Beat are grateful you didn't lose your life that day, and now that you have stopped running take a few moments and look back at your life. Is that a life you want to live? Or is that a life you want to go back to? Now that you have stopped running get the help you need, so you can live a pain free life.

There's A Place For Me

If I could live somewhere, anywhere, I would want to be in an island, somewhere where not many people are around, with all my family, and I mean ALL my family! I picture a big house on an island with my family. Around the area, I picture my friends being my neighbors, us going to school together and just hangin' out together without having to watch our backs, without having to worry of someone wanting to have funk or wanting to hurt us.

That's the place I wanna live in, somewhere peaceful, quiet, and just relaxing... In my island, I want a population of somewhere between 5,000 to 10,000 people, 40% of them being young teenagers around my age. And on that 40%, 27% are girls! I say girls because I think guys bring more funk, more drama. Girls bring drama as well, but that's just girls. And unlike girls, guys' drama is more dangerous than girls'.

But anyways, back to my island, my island would be surrounded by water, the sky always foggy but not cold, and birds (NOT pigeons!) flying around. The island would be called Paradise...

I'll be in that island soon, or at least, somewhere very similar.

-Yung Chuy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love your description of your island paradise (named Paradise), but we still have a couple of questions. One is, can you explain your last sentence to us? Why do you expect your island dream to come true soon? What do you know that we don't know? Another is why only 27% of the teenagers on your island would be girls if you believe they bring less drama? 27% girls means there would still be 73% boys, and that's a whole lot of drama (including fighting over those girls, since there would be two boys for every girl...). And finally, just a reminder that ALL islands are surrounded by water. That's the definition of "island."

Recognize The Usual

It's hard to recognize everything out of the usual because a lot of people do the same things, such as our parents. All of our parents bring all of us up by sacrificing a lot for us. They sacrifice their time from their lifetime of living to raise us. Not just the way we are now, but to raise us up in a good way.

What we don't recognize is that our parents do it out of love. We don't recognize the love because we always think about ourselves and the fun things we do or all of the "good things" we have. We do recognize the love only when we get locked up, when our parents pass away, or when we become part of a situation.

I recognize the love when something bad happens, but I've changed that. Now I recognize the love because I see it from that person. It's easy to love and give, but it's hard to recognize the reason. Every purpose has a reason to be seen as recognition, but to recognize it takes heart.

Well, I'm off for now. I hope everyone recognize the love and respect I give. I recognize the love from my mom and family and everyone that I know. Even though, some people who doesn't like me for some reason, I still recognize that they have a thought of me in their heads.

And of course, last but not least, "The Beat." I recognize the love, appreciation, and support. Thanks to those who've recognized me for the person I am. And thanks to my mom. Stay up everyone. Late.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What this piece tells us — as almost everything you write tells us — is that you have matured out of that child's mentality that always "think about ourselves" into the mentality of a responsible young adult who thinks of his life in relation to others. We appreciate you and everything you write, and only wish (as you must wish) that you had reached this stage in your maturity and development before you found yourself in the situation that led you here. Now, you must be a leader among your peers, doing what you can through the power of your words (which is the power of your heart) to prevent other young men and women from childish acts that lead to adult consequences. We expect much of you, Saetern, and you have not disappointed us. Thank you.

Whole Lotta Nothing For Whole Lotta Something

Return to the yesterday when I was not yet conceived
Return because happiness or peace cannot be achieved
My hope is that al around me this is nightmarish dreaming
Eventually my hope will run out and I will stop believing
I would go back to a day when I could not feel
Nothingness a comfort, heaven to what is real
I could and would never take my own life, don't misinterpret

But as far as trying to find understanding, I forfeit
I'm alone in this world with one exception, God
Bu God s just a murmur in my ear while my heart rots
Surviving just barely, trying to escape the confines of my own mind

I need a whole lotta luck to deal with father time
Fumbling with today, but I refuse to drop the ball
It gets harder each day waking up to wall, wall, wall, wall
Return to the yesterday when I was not yet conceived
Return because happiness or peace cannot be achieved

-Mr. Nobody, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope that your hope never runs out. You have such great language skills and you feel things so deeply, we encourage you not to make the mistake of judging your entire life by the snapshot of today. We don't believe that "happiness and peace cannot be achieved," even though we know that they are achieved and lost a achieved again a million times in one's life. We cannot know "the confines" of your mind, but we can see its expansive nature in this deeply moving poem. Look not to the past (to a time before you existed) but to the future and how to keep yourself physically free which has the added benefit of freeing your mind. Don't give up hope!

Recognize My Grandma

My grandma is in my life more than anyone and I feel really sorry 'cause I don't show her that I have good in me. She is just so shocked at me cause she raised me and my three siblings since day one because my dad, in and out of prison and my mom has never really been in my life.

Since I started getting in trouble and shhh like that-the only things they got me is jail and that's the only thing it's going to get me besides death.

So when I get out I need to show my grandma some recognition by getting a job and showing my two younger siblings examples in life and how to go, and tell them I've been there and done that so don't try it.

-Miguel, Solano

From The Beat: Good idea. It really sounds like you see where that activity leads, and that you don't want to go there. Be firm in your commitment to what's really important, your younger siblings and the love and care of your Grandma.

My Anger Is Taking Over

Me I am changing and I can't take it.

This is too much for me I can't hang on.

It feels like I'm a bomb waiting to explode.

If something else goes wrong I might do something that I'm gon' regret.

I can't express myself in tears so I express myself in anger.

I punch, kick, and go crazy.

I don't think nobody can deal with the stress that I'm dealing with.

On the outside it looks nice, on the inside there's a devil just devouring my heart.

It wants me to fight it.

It's not going to win because God is on my side.

My anger is taking over.

-Damar, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really well written piece - you've described something very intangible, and made it wholly real for the readers. If you can find a way to channel the anger, instead of pushing it down, you may find it easier to let go of. Write about everything you're angry about, everything you can think of that angers you, and why it gets to you. Do push-ups, do something physical, anything nonviolent that you think could help you let go of the anger instead of holding it in.

Still Standing. Never Falling.

When I was a young teen I started selling my body and it wasn't something I woke up one day and said I wanted to do it. I swallowed my pride and did what I had to do. I am not going to say it was the hardest but it wasn't the easiest.

My situation was very different from most girls. I didn't have to go turn dates. It's something I had to do and it was hard. I ran from home and was scared to come back so I moved to LA and did the first thing the game sent my way. I lived in a room and I ate fast food for a year. I missed my mom and my family and I did not want to out there any more. My best friend was out there with me and I had left her so it was just me and God.

I went to jail and that's when I thought I was done. I wasn't. I hit the track one more time and got pregnant and it changed my whole life. I think of prostitution as a drug and I've been clean for five months and I don't have intention of relapsing.

-Lil' Mama, Fresno

From The Beat: Congratulations on your five months off your drug. There is nothing worth saving more than when we save ourselves from ourselves because if we can't protect our own self then how can we expect to protect and value ourselves in the world.

If There was Something to Change

I will change many things
 Regrets I have many
 but what can I do?
 Get up and move on
 Keep my head up
 because all the things I been through
 only makes a kid stronger.
 Family and friends
 lost in their ways
 loved ones dead
 ODing
 getting killed.
 We all got skills and talents.
 We waste them.
 Trying to chase the money.
 Many of us don't know what real hard work is
 calloused hand, tired bones
 No!
 We stand on corners
 or steal from people.
 Some of us need Jesus
 A lot of us know him
 still don't want to listen.
 We all got a mission
 We trying to survive
 Hopefully to see a better day.
 Take me back to the time when I was a child
 Peace and tranquility was all I knew
 it was perfect
 all the family together.
 I was blind.
 Didn't know there was issues rising
 soon everything would fall apart.
 Drugs and gangs
 would come in my life
 tear it apart.
 Now good and evil will collide
 mess with my mind.
 Turn my life around.
 Would have me choosing two paths
 which one will I choose?
 Which one? Which one?
 God please help me
 Hear me out.
 I'm asking which one?

-Asking, Solano

From The Beat: We hear you feel torn. You also say you are trying to survive and see a better day. Choose life, creativity—not destruction.

Creepin'

Seems the madness started at the brain
 Digging deep past my flesh and veins
 To the point where foo's question if I'm sane
 To this passion my organs are reigns
 Focusing every movement to inflict pain
 Laughter erupts 'cause I hold no shame
 You can tell by the looks what side I claim
 Ties of association heavily restricted
 Catch me only with the sickest of wicked
 Distributing no mercy with damage inflicted
 Displaying a poker face like you never existed
 Enemigas tried pero I'm set up resistant
 Keepin' trucha is straight day-in-day-out persistent
 Outsiders and unknowns are kept distant
 'Cause a player's true cards aren't always listed
 Enter my eyes and view directly from my sight
 Feel the hatred burn with all the fire's might
 An internal inferno hell raised to light
 Created a modern day demon eager to fight
 Holding that rag way too close and too tight
 Creepin' amongst the shadows cast by night
 Misted air cooling the atmosphere just right
 Prepared for whatever may unfold or arise
 Observing closely from what appear to be closed eyes
 Pernicious agony cast upon those I despise
 No limits drawn for the side mi corazon lies
 Every challenge I accept, so foo', place your bet
 Fortification resulting from all obstacles met
 Not a day passes that I'll ever regret

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Frankly, though there may be no day that you regret, we simply can't believe that there are not things in your past, which you don't regret. You may not regret 'the big picture,' but some of the small pieces that make up that big picture are things which you must wish were different (as we all do). If not, life has taught you nothing, and we can see that it has taught you plenty. We don't know what to say to you, Grumpy, except this: the "modern day demon eager to fight" is already fighting with the young woman who wants to go to college, to become a lawyer, to do righteous battle with a system that hurts children. You're holding that rag so close, it's more like a blindfold, keeping you from knowing where to focus that intense passion and, thus, risking having it dissipated in a brilliant but shattered display of impotent fireworks. You are standing at a major fork in your road, forced to decide whether to follow the path of least resistance (which is the path you've been on), or to take "the road less traveled." We're holding our breath...

Struggle

Some struggle with drug addiction
 Some struggle with no parents
 Some struggle with rape and abuse
 Some struggle with fear of being abandoned.
 Some struggle with disabilities and retardation
 Some struggle with poor families and no jobs or education
 Some struggle with no role models or father figures
 But all in all what do I struggle with?
 I struggle with not having that father figure love. That's why
 I search for love in all the wrong places.
 I struggle with breaking the cycle of becoming like my
 mother and grandmother
 I struggle with trusting, males and being understanding
 and considerate of their struggles
 Some struggle with being patient and being ornery
 Some struggle with dealing with stress under pressure
 Some struggle with my inner desire of negativity
 We all have struggles. Face yours.

-Precious, Fresno

From The Beat: We struggle with being overwhelmed and thinking we can't make a difference. We struggle with negativity, doubt and wanting to close up, wanting to hide and no longer feel but we are willing to work on our struggles today and that makes today a good day.

*Ohes
 Beat
 With Oh*

Alone but not Alone

I feel so alone. My parents gave up on me. I feel like a failure.
I've done so much to myself and my family. I hurt them so much,
and now I feel like they hate me. I went to court. They weren't there.
I wrote my family and I didn't receive a single letter.
No visits. No love. I feel like it's all their fault.
I feel so alone but yet there's people all around me. I'm not here to make friends.
No family support. I know they love me but I feel they hate me.
Again I will say, I'm in here again. My second time.
I'm trying to go to Jobs Corp to start all over. Make my family proud.
Show my sister the right way to go. My mom's using. My dad's in and out of prison.
My Grandma's health is not so good. My little sister is ill and I'm her only role model.
I want to change. I want to do something with my life.
I'm gonna get into college and one day become a doctor.
I want to show my Mom and my Grandmother that I'm not worthless.
I'm an angel of God. I can do whatever I want. I want to be a Doctor, a nurse, a teacher.
I'm just at a stoplight. And it's almost turning green. I feel so alone.
No family to turn to, neighborhood not safe, drugs in the house and all around me.
Old friends are not really friends. I feel so alone.

-Hard times, Fresno

From The Beat: Well you're not alone. We hear loud and clear and we've been there and we know what it's like. Mom and Pop not acting like parents. It's easy to read the situation as our failure but there are many people out there who get lots of love and support from their family and these people turn their back on their family and stick needles in the arms and smoke crack without even thinking about it. There are people out there who have never had a family. They have never had a parent. Parents do a lot for us but they don't do everything. We are the ones who react and act out our lives. We are not dependent on our families. We must take responsibility and see ourselves and our situation. We can determine our fate regardless of what our family does or doesn't do. Good luck and you are not alone. We are here too.

Return

I would like to go back and do what my PO told me to do, like come in the house at 6:00 p.m. I did sometimes, but not all the time. So my PO put me in jail.

I would like to go back and do good in school because I will always get into it with my classmates, or get into it with the teachers. They always called my PO and they would tell her all the things that I did.

People would talk to me, and sometime sit worked. I will get it through my head. But some people are always sayin' something to make me mad. But I got to ignore them people who are trying to bring me down. I got to step up and be a man in the house and out of the house. I got to take my responsibility in my actions, and be able to say, "Yes, I did that and I'm sorry for doing what I did."

-Cash, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you need to learn how to walk away from situations where you want to go off on someone. If you get into it with your classmates and your teacher, and if you find that people are always saying things that make you mad, then it's you that must adjust to them by ignoring them. They are pushing your buttons because they know they can. Once they learn that those buttons don't work any more — that you won't take the bait and fight — they will stop pushing them. Your desire to be a man and take responsibility for your actions tells us that you are already beginning to think more like an adult than a child. Keep that movement going, and don't forget the things you hope to do that you wrote about.

My Life Wasted

There is a place for . that place is called the music industry. I feel that that is where I belong, engineering sessions, producing beats, touring with different artists, working and getting new people.

I imagine that place to be time stressful, filled with confusion, busy schedules, way too many hours of work with less sleep. Working all night, falling asleep at my work station, not getting home 'til five in the morning, creating new sound, creating originality, listening to loud music of all different genres.

-Dow Jones, San Francisco

From The Beat: Since the Dow Jones averages have been all over the map for months, we're not sure why you chose that name since you are clearly focused as a laser! It's clear you've given a lot of thought to this future — filled with restless days and nights, worry and work, and, ultimately, self-fulfillment. Sounds like a great life to us, and we hope it's what happens in yours.

Da Truth

Now to reveal the true meaning of these sequels and "people." You people tend to lie a lot. Some people call 'em habitual liars. Me, myself, I call 'em fraudulent. People do anything just to fit in, like tell fake stories such as you read in books or in the last Beat. These kind are imposters.

It's many different calibers. Some kill; some steal; some will do just about anything. But don't believe the hype that's the meanin' of these stories I wrote. People can make up anything.

Now for the sequels. Why it was more than one is because the numerous of generations that failed to accumulate and calculate the formation that has been goin' on. But that's 'cause we was never given the information at an early age. So here we are now, and the mind state we in now don't wanna let us process it as the right thing when we have that information.

They brainwashin' us for real. Peep game. In 1712, some cracker named Willie Lynch wrote a letter and gave a speech on how to keep us in slavery. Some of his quotes say, "We lay down the following principles for long range comprehensive economic planning: both horse and ninja are no good to the economy in wild or natural state." and that's where the halls and prisons come in to rehabilitate us and take and take us from our natural state.

Another quote of his: "Concentrate on future generations." And that's us. And last but not least with all that included, he said, "By the time a ninja boy reaches the age of 16, he is soundly broken in and ready for a long life of sound and efficient work and the (reproduction of a unit)." And it don't take a genius to figure what the U stand for in U7, U6, U5 or down the chain. No matter what the staff give or how coo' they is, never get comfortable with such. Never isolate yourself, but stay in the cuts and "watch" sometimes a that far table.

And last of all, do you 'cause can't nobody else do you, and others gone gravitate and that's when you orbit.

-E-Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire you for learning about this wretched old slaveholder, Willie Lynch (whose last name became a word to describe one of the most horrible crimes in American history). But what about some of the other things he said? He thought his methods would control slaves "for at least 300 years," so we KNOW he was dead wrong about that. But among his recommendations to control slaves was to "pitch OLD black male vs. the YOUNG black male... to use LIGHT skin vs. DARK skin... to use FEMALE vs. MALE." When we see black fighting with black, young fighting with old, males trying to control females, we have to wonder if that old cracker has left his mark on our society. What is your "natural" state? Is it different for one group than for another? Why is that? What does it mean to "do you" if "doing you" leads you back to this modern-day slavery? Keep using that brain to read and discover and think about your history as well as your future. And keep teaching!

You Can Never Get It Back, But We All Have Memories

To start off, what's up? By now, all you homeboys recognize Chango! Shhh we can think of all the good times we used to have. Postin' it up at the park, B-BQ, and drinking beer with the homies, we can enjoy what we're doing at that moment. And like that, by the snap of the thumb, it's over, and bam, you can never get that day back.

"I have no regrets," as many people say. They say it's what makes them who they are today. If I were given a chance to go back, I would go back to my first time drinking when I was seven. I stole one of my dad's Tecates out of his ice cooler, and ran with my homie Cody to our chicken coop in Gilroy and tried to drink! It was hella nasty, but for some reason, I liked it!

Ever since then, it's been somewhat downhill. I've made bad decisions while I was faded and all I regret. I accept that drinking is my problem, but it is hard to control or stop it because once I start, it's challenging to stop! I know one thing, though. I can get my unconditional love and support from my homies and family. I miss my house but soon enough I will get out and hopefully proceed on the streets and maintain my composure!

I would just have to say stay up to all the homeboys doing time and be grateful for what we got.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We admire your honesty and strength of character in expressing regrets for bad decisions you've made, as we've all made in life. But since you can't go back to undo that first sip of beer, Chango, you have to deal squarely with your problem today. The hard reality for you is that it's not only "challenging to stop" once you get started, it's nearly impossible. Which means, don't get started. You have to find a way to avoid the first drink that comes your way, or you will fade back into those bad decisions that hurt you and those you love. You are a very strong individual. But strength is not enough. We hope you seek out a supportive group to be with when you need to be reminded of where that path leads. You have so much to give; don't let those Tecates take it from you!

My Struggles

Nobody sees my struggles
They only see my troubles
It's hard focusing in dis world when no one loves you
It's misery when I think how I can live in peace
When my surrounding can't take seeing me succeed
So they put me down with words and try and make me grieve
But never cry cause I got no tears left in me
Can't be shy now talk, listen to me speak
And watch went I say what's on my mind make you really think
A lot of stuff happened to me which makes me unique
I grew up with a crack mama living on the streets
So I had to get a bundle just so I can eat
A couple months later I got caught up now I'm in JJC
Told the police my history and they just laughed at me
And said they was happy to get another black ninja off the
Streets.

-Bt Nell, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for writing - this is a really great piece. You give the readers a strong sense of your struggles and what your life has been like. Keep it up for The Beat!

What If

What if I'm not locked up right now? Would I still be on the block?

What if this was my first time in system? Would I still be here?

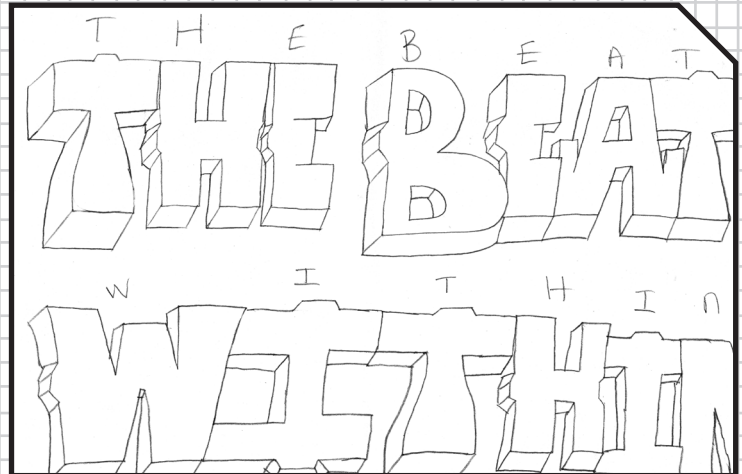
What if I never dropped out of school? Would I still be going to juvie's school?

All these things I've done. Its consequences has led me to terrible places. I regret so much, and I wish I can go back to the past. I know I can't make that happen, but what if I start to change things around? Would it bring my good old times back?

I may not know what will happen tomorrow, but every day I'm living my life to fullest. What if it'll bring my good times back?

-DK, San Francisco

From The Beat: All of our past experiences, including those we regret, are like lessons to guide us to a better future. No one knows what will happen tomorrow. But as you leave childhood, your adult mind can evaluate the choices you've made in life, and where those choices have led. We hope, as you become a man, you will try some new choices, the kind that lead away from places like this and towards the life of freedom you were born to have.



Return To Yesterday

If I could return to the day me and my ninja got arrested, I would change a couple of things. First, I would have told cous' that it ain't worth robbin' all them suckas. There's other ways to come up on some dough. We didn't have to make it hot. We could have been out there getting' it right now, smokin' a blunt with my ninjas and my cous', doin' it big, stayin' on that g status.

Now, though, me and my ninja in the halls. My ninja in Alameda juvi, still on that g shhh. And everything turned out wrong. we should have chilled a little, not get too greedy, be a little more careful and smarter, feel me? But if I really think about it, if I could return to yesterday, I wouldn't. I wouldn't because now that I'm in here, I learned a lot, and it gave me nothing but time to think about my life.

Nothing in this world is more valuable than experience. Now, the only thing left is to thug it out. You know what it is, cous'...

-GG, San Francisco

From The Beat: We were already with you when you were wishing you could undo the mistakes you made that led you here (even though we are ready to caution you that "doin' it big (and) stayin' on that g status" is a prescription for returning to lock-up...). But you completely surprised us with your very mature thinking that has allowed you to use this time to think about your life and what you want from it. We hope this new thinking will lead you to new actions, the kind that promote a life of freedom and accomplishment.

New Moon

To be wise I guess
 You have to have life experience
 I've been here for months
 And each day is not much different
 In this sub-society
 I am sub-human
 Little things and stupid games
 That is all we're doing
 We only see what we want to believe
 Coins behind his ears
 And tricks up his sleeve
 "Old man look at my life
 I'm a lot like you were"
 Don't tell me what I want to hear
 Life's just like a dirty word
 Trading off and taking turns
 No matter what crazy things happen
 Under a full moon
 There's always a new moon
 You live in the present
 Until the present is taken away from you
 Then you live in the past and future

-Lizy, Solano

From The Beat: We like the way you question life, and find the new moon despite the fact that things can really get complicated and difficult. Hopefully you are learning about yourself there, a different kind of adventure—and very challenging.

Harder than Most

I wish I could go back to the 5th grade. I was doing well for a little while and things went all bad when I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. And that's when things went haywire.

I started hanging with gangsters and I noticed I got down harder than most of them. But that isn't the point. I wish I had stayed in school.

My mom raised me and my little brother on her own, working two full time jobs so she really didn't have too much time for us. We grew up with my uncles and my grandmother. I think things would have changed if my father were present.

-Big Body, Alameda

From The Beat: Is it possible that you were angry your father wasn't around and your mom had to work so much—and that anger came out as you "got down harder" than others? It makes sense to feel angry, after all you were missing important relationships you needed. So you acted out. Now you see where that all got you...more pain and sorrow. So—go back! Return to that self that knows how to do good! You're young, catch up in school and create the life you'll feel good about.

No Place Like Home

The place I would like to be at in this world is home. Sometimes it is loud there, and sometimes it is not. You can sleep but if you're locked up you can't be home so there's no point of writing about home if you don't even know what's going on there.

The only reason I wrote about home was because I have not been there for a long time. Home has peace, food you can eat anytime, a bathroom, bedroom, a TV, DVDs, a place where you can do what you want, everything. Home has it all.

The thing that makes the house peaceful is my little baby girl. I love her and I wish I could see her.

-Chhit, Fresno

From The Beat: Home is special! Nothing can compare to the simplicity of just being in the comfort of your living room and enjoying TV. It sounds like you have a baby girl at home waiting for you! We hope you get out soon so you can be with her.

Better Recognize

While I was in Juvenile Hall. I met a woman named Ruby. She would come in to do bible studies. I never would have thought she would be so special to me. I never really had love from my mom so I didn't know what motherly love felt like until I met Ruby. She became my mentor when I got out.

There was not one day that passed that we wouldn't talk. She showed me what a mom was suppose to be like. She gave me hope. She told me that I was able to overcome whatever I wanted. It was something nobody ever told me before. She is the best thing that has happened in my life. I'm glad God put her in my life.

-Segundo, Fresno

From The Beat: Yes. Yes. Keep up the good work. Sounds good. You are lucky. We have realized that when we find someone who wants to help us and make us stronger then we should value that relationship and not take it for granted. Thank you for sharing your wonderfully positive experience.

Last Chance

Ninjas got locked up six times and kept getting chances. The first two times, they let me go home. Then the third time, I went to my first grouper. Kept running from groupers and kept catching cases. Then my last case, I thought it was over but I turned to my family for help, which I rarely do unless I want something. So I did, and they got me a lawyer.

I been here for two months, and finally I am going to get released back with the fam. I got one last chance. I ain't doing no mo' hot shhh. I'm finna get a job, get my paper game up, get my whip and start to get my shhh straight.

-Young C, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you keep the promises you make here because they will change your future. If you really think of this as "one last chance" (because nobody is guaranteed more chances), you should make the right decisions for your life. The one addition we wish we saw on your list of things you plan to do is finish school. If you don't get a diploma, at least get your GED. It makes a big difference. Good luck.

Fly Boy Adventures: Returning To Yesterday

What's poppin', Beaters? You know me, Skip, fly as ever! People wonderin' why I added Fly Boy to my name. Well, I see it as I have grown wings in here, and I'm startin' to elevate over all the people who want to see me fail. Once I get out, I'ma fly to succeed ya dig?

"Homie, if I could turn back the hands of time, I would've turned off the PS3 at 12:49..." But yeah, if I had an opportunity to return to a time when I could do or experience somethn' over again, it would be to relive my actions that led me to here. It was an unfortunate experience, but I wish I could do it all over, ya dig?

I wouldn't be giving up that much, because I've wasted time in here. I turned 18 in here, and some more shhh! However, I was on the run when I was out and I enrolled in college and I am taking my GED test. So these are some benefits of me being here.

But if I was out, I would have stayed clear of the police and spent my 18th birthday on the outs, and I would have turned myself in sooner or later. It's too late now, but I'm about to touch down soon, and I won't be back. So yeah, I'm out, Beat!

-Fly Boy Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure if you're saying that you'd like to relive the part where you were on the run, or the part that made you go on the run to begin with. In either case, though, the importance of the past is only as a guidepost to a future you want for yourself. You can't change your past, but you can use it to inform (and change) your future. And it sounds like that's exactly what you plan to do! Go for it, Skip!

Living to Run

In my life I have run from a lot of things. I never wanted to face my problems in life. Every time I was released to a group home or went to a foster home I always left. I didn't want to face reality. I didn't want my education. I never wanted to listen to anyone's stupid rules at the time. I wanted to be on my own.

I guess I always felt like everyone was out to get me and no one was on my side. I figured I could run and run and eventually my problems would be gone. Little did I know I was wrong. By me running I got myself into more trouble. I dug myself a hole. I thought I would never get out. I turned to drugs, men, even prostitution. I felt myself getting lower and lower. I eventually got caught and got locked up for 3 and a half months.

I got out and repeated my history. I'm back in here, eight months pregnant and praying to God for help. I'm tired of running and hiding from everyone and everything. I want to be a good mother and if I keep running I know I want to be able to raise my child.

-Gucci, Fresno

From The Beat: We tried running from our problems but like you said, the problems only seem to grow. Life can be scary and seem overwhelming but we have found, the more we work and care for our life then the more we want to work on our lives. We wish you the best luck and health in delivering and looking after your child.

Return To Yesterday

If I was able to return to a time in life, it will be July 3, 2006. the only reason I'll want to return to that time is because that was when I had first got caught up in the system. I wouldn't want to hold onto any memories of my past, because if I do, that's probably what's going to have me slip and end up right back in here.

Another time I'd like to jump back to is the very first time I started middle school because I never went. But whenever I did go, I ended up getting suspended or kicked out of class. It's amazing to me because whenever I'm in here, I do very good. But when I'm on the outs... well, it doesn't go so well.

My point in this topic is I'll return to only two times in my life because that's all I think I need.

-Gregory, San Francisco

From The Beat: The fact that you do well in here but badly out there suggests that you could use some more structure in your free life. It seems like you need a daily schedule, and someone to enforce it for you. What kind of problems did you have at middle school that caused you so much trouble? What about high school? We hope you're planning to get your diploma (or GED) because it can make a big difference in your future success.

Asking Why

Late night on the block just by myself and I ain't got nothing lose so my limits is the sky. Nobody comforts me but the pistol hugging my side. I'm a gangsta but I do believe there's a God.

A lot of my people got killed now I'm like Jadakiss asking why. Got tired of being broke, learned how to cook coke and sold my own supplies. Went to jail, no girls, no mail, momma stayed on my side. I love her for that, every time I see her I kiss and hug her for that. Took her through a lot, she still never turned her back.

So all the love that she gave me I'm returning it back. Gonna get my diploma 'cause to her it means more then a platinum plaque.

-M'Boy, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a great piece, Mac Boy (we had to edit your name, we aren't allowed to have numbers up in here). You say you want to get your diploma to make your mother happy, but what are your own goals and dreams?

Not Applicable

I wish I could go back to when I was 10 years old. That's where my problems began. I had some issues at home so I wanted to get away. I went to my friend's house and he was smoking weed as usual except this time I decided to join in. That was the worst choice of my life, the funnest but the worst.

Since then I've been in and out of trouble and jail. I had fun but it wasn't worth the cost. Just this time that I'm doing right now, I've already done 1093 days. It feels good to know that I'm getting out finally in 2 weeks. But I continue to ask myself if I'll continue doing what I'm doing.

I feel changed, act changed and I think positively. I've been in the same situation more times than I can count and thought I would do good but didn't--I know that I can't change the past but I'm gonna change the future. I don't like the way my last six years have been so I have to do something different.

If I don't like something I'm gonna try to avoid it. The only way to avoid what I've been through is to do good and be successful. It's the same as if its nasty food you wont eat it unless you have to which is usually if you're locked up or stranded just like the way I was-except I didn't have to do it nobody held a gun to my head or threatened my family. I didn't have to get in trouble and get locked up, I know I didn't like it so why did I do it? That answer is not applicable.

-Baby Face, Solano

From The Beat: It's good to ask yourself if you'll continue to do what you used to, especially since it really sounds like you want a different life. It makes so much sense that if you don't like the way the last six years have been, that you do something different. Good luck.

If I Could Go Back

I wish I could go back in time to change the situation I'm in right now. I say that because I've been doing a lot of stupid stuff in my life. I wish I could take everything back so I could do everything right so my family could be happy and proud instead of being disappointed all the time.

I would stay away from the wrong crowd and stay in school and really try to learn instead of just wasting my time. Now it's really hard to change cause of all of these stuff I'm used to doing, and missing a lot of school makes it real hard for me to catch up.

I wish I could take it back because it would make everything much better and easier. It was fun for a moment but now I regret it all. It's just a wish a wish that I hope could come true.

-Lefty, Solano

From The Beat: Well you're lucky because you're young and have the chance to change it all up. You can still do good in school, especially if you realize it's worth it to work hard and catch up. We think if you start to do well your family will really be glad and support you strongly. Don't forget what you've learned, and don't keep making the same mistake until you no longer have another chance...

My Thang

If I could go back in time

I would of never done my crime

If I could of never been on the grind

Then I wouldn't be in this bind but

Then I wouldn't of been able to get mines

But I aint even tripping because I'ma do my time

-Quany, Solano

From The Beat: We know you can do your time. We want you to be able to get what you need too, just without having to trade your freedom and integrity for it.

Why People Think The Hood Is Bad

People think the hood bad because hoods are going back and forth shooting up each other. Kids are on the corner selling drugs. Kids be skipping school and dropping out, people in the hood stealing cars so they could go shooting up the next hood. Dope fiends going around stealing, begging, collecting cans. Liquor stores on every corner and the crime and murder rate just keeps going up.

To me that's why people who don't live in the hood think it's bad, but to me the hood is not all that bad. Some of it I do but some of it I don't, like for example, the dudes and girls selling drugs on the corner, they just trying to get their money to feed themselves or their family.

It's just a job just like any other person instead of working at a fast food restaurant or somewhere else. They choose to sell drugs. That's just one example and I don't approve of everything in the hood but I see it different because I live there. That's all I got to say until next time Beat stay up.

-Young Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: What you say is true, people everywhere need to survive. The jobs available to people in the hood may be different than those available other places. We think kids need more support in school, and need better schools so that they have better opportunities to get good jobs. Fast food or drug dealer is not enough. We've also heard it does not feel good to sell drugs to people when you know how it hurts them or when you could get locked up for trying to feed yourself.

No Dirt Or Dust

I always think of a piece and quiet place twenty-four seven. I never had time to think in the outs, but now I'm locked up in juvie, and think about a wonderful land.

I know for a fact there is a peace and quiet place somewhere, maybe even your house. I would share it with my loved ones. It would be just like heaven — nice people, perfect houses and the land.

Getting locked up is hell for me. This isn't peace. The first thing I would do is go shopping, because it is always fresh... no dirt or dust ever.

-Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We feel sad to know that you never had time to think about a place like this — a sanctuary — when you were out the outs. We hope you find your place of peace, and we hope it's as clean and fresh as you imagine it.

Return To Yesterday

What's up Beat? The topic I'm writing about is "Return To Yesterday." To be truthful with you, I wouldn't turn back to yesterday because I wouldn't be the strong young lad that I turned out to be. I wouldn't have been put through the struggles that me and my family has gone through I wouldn't return back to yesterday because I was a young square, lost for words, not knowing who was going to jump on me and which direction they was coming from.

Now, I found in my heart that I will never be that person again. I would never let a man rape me or run over me again in my life. The person who I am today will never let something like that happen. I feel now I'm stronger and can't no one overpower me ever again. I wouldn't be able to help my mother and siblings like how I do today. I wouldn't be their backbone if I had went back into time or returned to yesterday. So, basically, I wouldn't return to yesterday. So, basically, I'm livin' for tomorrow satisfactory.

This might be my last entry. But I'm out until next time.

-Queen B, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish you didn't have to go through the violence and personal violation you did to make you the strong young woman you are today. But we're glad you ARE strong and unwilling to let a man treat you the way you've been treated in the past. We hope you'll think about writing to The Beat even after you walk out these doors. You can always "teach us" something about the life you're living, whether locked up or free, at home with children or at work, in school or on the streets. Keep writing.



Skip's Broadcast: Recognition For Myself

Beat, if I had to fast forward to the time where I'm lyin' six feet underground — whether it be me getting killed or natural causes — I have a lot I should be recognized for while I was here. I feel I would have a great impact on the world.

I don't want to be remembered for my frequent incarcerations, but that I was an intelligent individual who was very affable. And I used my talents for good, and learned from my mistakes. I feel I have impacted a few of my peers, and hopefully I will be remember for that.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope, when the time comes (far, far into the future), you'll be remembered for all that you've done and all that you are. Of course you don't want to be judged by your "frequent incarcerations," but they are a part of who you are and who you will become. In some respects, we think adults who were incarcerated as children but who accomplish wonderful things in their lives (just being there as a father raising his children is one of those wonderful things) are even more worthy of praise than those of us who grew up with only minor adversity and had much less to overcome to achieve whatever it is we might achieve. (Indeed, you ARE very affable.)

RIP Dad

There's one thing I wish I could take back. It was my third birthday. My mom and I went to the doctor that morning and I was fighting with her so it took her forever to get me in and out of the doctors.

The reason I'm writing this is 'cause when we left that morning, my dad was released from prison and he got home and we weren't there.

My uncle had come over and they started fighting and my uncle killed my dad. I think if I hadn't fought with my mom, my dad would still be alive. RIP Dad, I love you.

-Goblin, Fresno

From The Beat: Your story pains us. You blame yourself, but the tragedy of your dad's death is not your fault, you were just a child. It hurts to recall such painful memories. Thank you for having the courage to share this with us.

If There Is A Place For Me!

If there is a place for me
Where I am suppose to be?
I will like to know
'Cause I don't want to cry no more,
I'm getting tired of living in the today
And just can't stop thinking about yesterday
And the day I went away
And left alone my bay
But still looking for that place to have it my way
I am going into this not really knowing
What I will find
But I have decided to abandon my heart
And follow my mind,
And hope I leave you and my past behind.

-Lavelle, San Francisco

From The Beat: The one thing we both know is that that place for you is NOT here! None of us can really put the past behind us, but we can use it to guide us to a better future. You can too. Better days lie ahead.

Love

Well shoot let me see what is or what does "love" mean?
Well to me love is no longer in my heart. Shhh I'm like
the tin man wanting a heart cause it seems like when you
find someone to fall in love with, you end up losing him/
her.

To me love ended when my grandma and my grandpa
were gone they got took by a gun and my grandpa he took
her from everyone she loved and love her. Well it was so
fast and I was shocked and it hurt me. I haven't been able
to be my loving caring self ever since. I love my mom and
my family but I mean like other people. So I leave you
with that for today.

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: You have a challenge greater than many of us, though we all work at being able to love others well. We can't help but try to protect ourselves when we feel we might get hurt, and we have to learn that in spite of that danger it is worth it to love. Keep working on yourself and begin by caring for little things, and your self—everyday. You'll get better and better at it.

Goals And Dreams

My first goal is to get out of here because I been in here
for two months, and I have to be in here for another two
months, and maybe more.

My second goal is when I do get out, I'ma finish school
and do what I have to do get off of probation.

My dream is to go to college in Atlanta, Georgia, so I
can be a forensic scientist.

-Dri, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always admire pieces that lay out an objective for the future, especially ones as worthy as those you are pursuing. It won't be easy to become a forensic scientist (at least it wouldn't be for us; science was never easy for us...), but if you reach this destination, you will never be without a job. Keep your eyes on the prize!

Recognize

What's up with The beat, dawg? This the famous Newt
man still at it. Man, you better recognize the life you
living. It's not a joke. These streets is dangerous. The
life everybody living is not safe. Everybody need to stop
the violence and come together. I'm getting out this beef
shhh. I swear.

-Yung J Newt, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think your advice is right on, and we hope you follow it yourself. We took out the last line, though, because the way you wrote about that "chrome thang" undermined the point you were trying to make.

Election 2008

Today's topic is about this years election with Barack
Obama Vs. John McCain. It was a good year but next year
when Obama goes into office, it will be one of the better
years America has seen in a while.

Let me start on John "Funny-Face" McCain. I don't
like him at all because he is a war hungry sucker. He
wants to start wars in countries just for no reason. Yes,
he survived in a war himself but it is ridiculous to start
wars, send our friends, lovers & family to fight for no real
reason. He wanted to send more soldiers to Iraq to blow
more things up and have us citizens pay to rebuild their
country. AGAIN McLame doesn't understand really how
much he will affect this country.

Now Barack Obama, he is a lot better than McCain
and George Bush. Obama wants to stop the war and
bring home our brave soldiers. He wants our economy to
improve. He wants our nation to become a better place
than it once was. Obama made a perfect point about the
war. Basically it is over. Bush wanted the soldiers out
their to protect the pipe line he wanted to so them crazy
bastards won't blow them up. Bush made the deal with
the Iraq president to build an oil line from Iran to Iraq so
they can transport oil to the US cheaper.

I don't know what Obama is going to do about the
pipeline we are building but I hope whatever decision
they make, it is the best and not to turn into the worst.
I hope Obama really looks into his decision so he can
determine the pros and cons of his decision. Hope they
make the decisions to bring home our soldiers to live a
life with our family and my family doesn't have to go to
war.

-Obama Supporter, Fresno

From The Beat: We appreciate the passion you have for the election, this country and its soldiers and the country improves and gets stronger.

My Situation

Man, what's up with The Beat? This ya boy Drew down
here in SF JJC just finta speak my mind on how I feel
about my situation.

I been to this place eleven times, but this time I came
for some bullshhh. Now they finta send me off to Glenn
Mills in Pennsylvania for 18 months. Now that's some can
shhh, but I got to do it. I been here for like two or three
months and im still goin' to be in here for Thanksgiving.
They just told me yesterday. I don't find out when I leave
'til December eighth, and it be taking a couple months for
the Mills to pick someone up.

Basically, my holidays is gone. I was up here on
Halloween and I already know it was finta be poppin', but
a ninja got took down on a mainy one so I can't do shhh
but take whatever these grimy-ass people give. I wish y'all
wouldn't take some of my explicit language out 'cause
these people need to hear it.

That's all I gotta say fo' now. Slide through next week,
I'll be here.

-Drewski, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may be here for "some bullshhh," but Glenn Mills could be a blessing. Until you have that experience, you won't know. But one thing is certain, your attitude will determine your altitude. In other words, if you expect the worst, that's what you'll find. But if you go with an open mind, knowing that you can always learn more (just as we all can), then you can reap the best of what the Mills has to offer. As for printing your explicit language, sorry we can't oblige. Just as you might suffer negative consequences if you were to say those words directly to staff, so would we if we are too graphic in what we print. We could lose the entire program if we aren't careful. (The Beat has been kicked out of some counties for this reason.) We are guests, and have to respect the rules if we want to stay.

Rap!

I been tripping off these problems that I had lately
this girl called my mama and said she two months
pregnant with my baby

I been going thru this pain but y'all don't understand

I'm a boy but this jail turnin' me into a man

I tell my squad stay banged up and stay safe

I try not to show it but it's a whole lot of pain in my face.

-Young Marco

From The Beat: We see there's a lot going on...and we wonder what is the relationship between how you feel about this girl, and her pregnancy—and your squad? Does the pain come from the way these two things don't fit together easily when you live your life? Or what? A lot changes when it's no longer just you—when there's another life depending on you.

Going to Speak

What's up with The Beat? You know me, still in this thing waiting to get transferred. If I can go back in time I'll go back to the day I got took down. If I would of known that day that I was gone go down for an attempt, I would have stayed at the spot. I'm going to speak on this topic next week. I'm out.

-Lano

From The Beat: We'd like to hear more of what you have to say. We wonder why you wait to speak?

I Ran

I wish I could go back to the day I ran from the group home so I will not be here and go back home.

-Donald

From The Beat: You can't go back, but you can be sure you never do that again. Good luck.

Better Recognize

My mom, she do everything. She rides for me she fought for me she do everything for me, buy me clothes, chains, and games. Even though I could get my own money and do my thing ya dig.

-Julius

From The Beat: What kind of future does she want for you? Does she support you livin' a legit life? Do you listen to her?

Yesterday

I would return to yesterday, or a previous chapter in my life. I would love to share life with my mom before she did 8 years in prison. I think she was different before jail. She's a great person now but she probably was even better then.

-Mississippi

From The Beat: Was she in prison while you were a kid? If so we're sure you missed her also. How is your relationship with her now?

Tonio

When you mention Tonio critic say the god hot arrogant is something that the god is not sign autograph flow in front of the barbershop 'cause when I start I find it very hard to stop cause my destiny is known I'm young Tonio protecting the throne.

-Antonio

From The Beat: We wonder why, if the "god" is not arrogant, how come he is called a god? It's good to read your writing; the rhythm is strong. What do you predict for 2009?

This Place

If I could create a place I would create a place with a lot of weed and some females so I could be happy. The quiet thing about this place is that you going to be sleepy.

-Goofy

From The Beat: What would you create for thirst? Would everyone sleep on waterbeds here? What if you created a place where you didn't even need weed to be happy, what would that be like?

Regrets

The day I robbed a quick stop was the worse day of my life. I wish I would have obeyed my curfew and went home.

But I think getting caught was for the best because if I would have got away, I would have continued to rob stores and my charges would have been much worse. I've been stressed every since that day and I have a whole new outlook on life and when I get out I'm going to be successful.

-David

From The Beat: Sorry about the stress, however it is very good that you have felt the consequences enough to decide never to do this again. We wouldn't want you to have more serious charges, or have anyone hurt in the process. How exactly are you going to work at being successful? We wish you well...work hard!

Ain't that about... it

I remember the time when I didn't have no problems, no worries, no nothing. That was the best. I used to wild out all the time. I didn't give a damn. I use to rob, beat on, and worse all the time. Then I got caught for doing what I was doing everyday. I robbed some dude and I got snatched on. Then I came to the hall for the first time.

I wasn't tripping, cause I did the crime so now I had to do the time. I got sent to camp my first time here. Then I got released and 3 months later I get caught and sent to the hall.

For nothing, I changed. I started doing my thing a different way. But it didn't work. Now they were trying to send me to R.O.P. for a crime that I never committed.

But I got blessed because I could have been tried as an adult. I'm about to be 18 in a couple of months. Even though I didn't do it. I got to make the best of whatever situation I'm in. I had an interview to Sacramento. I hope that I get to go soon.

-Close Call

From The Beat: We wonder what you mean, "for nothing, I changed." How did you change? How did you do your "thing a different way?" You are indeed blessed not to be tried as an adult. Maybe we are all lucky the brakes have been put on, and you have a chance to re-think your actions and your life. You don't want to go into the adult system.

If I Was To Return

If I was to return back to the day I hit the dude that made me get on probation. Because if I would have never hit him then you guys would probably have never ever met me but every thing happens for a reason.

But I told cause stop doing what he was doing or I was going knock his butt out, he didn't so I fired on him and then the next day I got arrested and put on probation and that was the start of the cycle.

-Lil' Rolo

From The Beat: So what do you think is the reason this happened this way? Did this keep you from doing things more serious? Have you thought about your life and decided to make changes. What matters most to you. You are a smart guy, what do you want to do with your life?

Juvenile Hall Is Not The Place For Me

It's not the place for me because I am an out-going person with a lot of energy. Just sitting in a room all day I get frustrated because I have no freedom. Me waking up when they want me to and them telling me to go to my cell motivates me to do better in life, like listen to my mom and other family members that the streets and hanging out on the corner all day is not the life.

-Eric

From The Beat: If the street life isn't the life you really want, what kind of life DO you want? Tell us about where you'd like to be, and how you plan to get there.

Go Back

If I could restart my life I would want to go back to kindergarten, change my friends and have a different life so I wouldn't have to be here right now. I would not have my mama worrying about me when I was always out and I would have been there more for my little brother and sister. If I had a chance to go back I wouldn't think twice.

-Jm

From The Beat: Although you can't go back, you can move forward! You are still so young, so starting over right now is definitely possible. And then you can help your mom stop worrying and be there for your siblings...

Get In Get Out

When I was younger my goal was always to get in the drug game and get out, but as I got in I lost loved ones and people that I mostly care about, and the droughts came and all the money slows down and ninjas start fonking. As all this happened you think that the goal to get in and get out, the deeper it gets the more and more you get deeper in the game and you choose to continue to do what you doing. You drank 1800 and smoke grapes to ease the pain and get under the influence and remember all the good times when you and yo bras was shiny on the block. Now he six feet deep and all you got is pictures and memories.

-Lil Gamab

From The Beat: A lot of people, like yourself, start in the drug business small, not intending to get so deep into that lifestyle. But the bigger the money gets, the bigger the problems get, and the harder it is to back out. You tell a truthful and all too common story. The big question is, how do you get out now that you're in so deep?

Friends

So many of us have 'em "friends"
Friends we can depend on "friends" (Next Friday)
To me, friendship means loyalty, respect and honesty!
My patnas that I be with are the realest ninjas I know!
They got heart, no snitches.
They are the ones that got your back on anything!
My patnas are like brothers to me.
Unfortunately me and my patnas are locked up!
One in the max unit and the others are here with me!
I would just like to say to everybody
keep your head up and hope for the best and prepare for the worst!
One love for all locked up!

-Chavita

From The Beat: It must pain you to see your friends suffering jail along with you. Since you are a true friend to them, will you encourage your patnas to get out of the game, so that they can enjoy freedom? If you are allowing them to do things that will get them locked up again, are you really a good friend?

Exercise

When I wake up I feel like not getting up. But if I don't get up I'll stay in my room and I get mad. Sometimes I don't want to exercise but it gets my mind off my problems.

I don't feel like exercising but I remember that it refreshes my mind and this encourages me. So I encourage you to encourage yourself to do whatever you need to do to help you and you will feel better about yourself.

-Jose

From The Beat: What kinds of exercises do you do? Do some help more then others? Do you stretch before and after?

An Unexpected Welcome Back

What's up? This is Looney from Oakland. Nobody plans to come here but I can't believe that they brought me here for a stolo, out of all things. But it's cool though. They're talking about sending me out of state to my aunt, but I don't think that's about to happen. Come now, wouldn't you be mad if at first they approved you to go out there but at the last minute they changed their mind?

I came to the hall on the 22nd of October and they said they wanted me to go out there so I told my PO that that's what I think is best right now. And I waited an additional two weeks and at the disposition hearing they said it's good. But then it changed...

-Marcus

From The Beat: We know it's incredibly frustrating to be constantly shuffled around by the system. What do you do when you are locked up to help you deal with it?

Homies Get Regrets Too

What's up Beat it's me Chuchoman. I am hella juice, about to leave the hall in like two weeks back to camp that's good. I'm a make sure I don't come back to the hall. I'm a finish camp. And after that I'ma stay on my toes with the cops and snitches, that's why I am here. But my game got wiser up in here, I learn hella shhh good and bad but it's good.

For all the fallen homies. Rest In Paradise Man I miss riding with y'all smoking, drinking, doing our thang y'all know y'all will never be forgotten. I love y'all, it been crazy since y'all left. Y'all know what we did. So I will probably see y'all soon

-Chucho

From The Beat: Sounds like you have no regrets or remorse for the things you've done in the past, things that you also say will likely lead you to an early grave. What is it about what you're doing that's so important to you? What do you get out of it, other than coming to the hall and living in constant danger? Us readers would love to know what draws you to it.

Time For Change

It's time to change my life. My life is going in circles. What I need to do is make it go straight because if my life went straight, I wouldn't be in the place I'm at now.

This ain't cool. This shhh cruel. Ain't nothing nice in back of these blues. All your four walls, that's gonna make you go blue. I've been to this thing five times and now I've got a baby on the way, I got to stop doing crimes. I think I could say this gonna be my last time. (Good advice: don't come here or the pen. Shhh ain't cool.)

-Taje

From The Beat: We're glad you are wanting to straighten your life out. We're wondering what your plan is. What does it mean to straighten out your life? What will the challenges be? What questions do you have? Do you have people to support you? We support you! So, tell us your thoughts about how it's going to happen.

Hard To Love a G (part 2)

Shawty say she wants a gangsta but let me put you up on game
I'm going to still be me, girl, I ain't never going to change
goin' stay the same forever whether you like it or not
take me as I am 'cause if not, kick rocks
every girl wanna thug, every girl wants a G
but when they get one it's not what it seems
in an' out of jail a soldier for the cause
out all night never able to call
ain't never with another chick, I may flirt a little bit
but I'm not focused on that, I'm focused on my chips
clockin' dollars 'cause money's the motivation
thuganomics 101 if you need a demonstration
class in session, plus education is a must
an' the first thing I learned is a mark an' a prostitute don't
trust
second thing I learned was to get my scratch
an' to keep my mouth closed with every case I catch
collect 200 an' pass go 'cause if you loyal don't just state
it

'cause while I'm locked I got a lot of boxed up
frustrations
catchin' cases, felonies and them misdemeanors
don't say you love me an' don't lead me on either
give me those things an' I promise to keep it real
whether you like it or not I'm going to give it to you trill
but if you don't then I'm going to move to the next
makin' all right while stayin' in the left
play life like it's chess, so I stay suspicious
an' I can spot the two-face, jealous an' vicious
smile now cry later them two snake faces
Salvadorean Mexican Puerto Rican the best baby-makin'
races
but if you really want a G, girl, accept me for who I am
that's that Latin with an attitude Salvadorean Mexican
can never turn yo' back on me an' call me a stranger
baby didn't know it was hard to love a g.

- Lil' Savage

From The Beat: You are asking for a lot, aren't you? Again, we think you have more choices than you think you do and that you can change more than you think you can. Successful relationships tend to be all about compromise. Honesty does count for a lot though, we agree.

In My Life

In my life I seen and done things that I regret doing and seeing. As a young man I have dreams over and over when I seen my friend get shot in the head I see it slow motion like I was in his shoes. After that ten minutes in my life I have learned to love and laugh like every second was the last second.

-Daniel

From The Beat: As tough a lesson as it is to learn, a lot of positives can come out of living every moment like it's your last. It can make you be more proactive and take action to get where you want to be. It can also be negative though, and make you act as if there were no consequences or future to worry about. Hold on to your philosophy, just make sure it isn't pushing you to the negatives.

"Return To Yesterday"

If I could go back to a place and a time in my past, I wouldn't go back at all. Because what I went through in the past made me who I am. Things happen for a reason, and only God knows why things happen the way they do.

-Jesus

From The Beat: This is a very profound statement, Jesus. Are there particular experiences you've had that you think made a big impact on who you are today?

All By Myself

I want to thank my friends for the mail 'cause I been goin' through a lot since they put me in this jail that put me in a cell with just me and my relationship with God is what kept me relaxed.

The DA will say anything except the facts they had a lot of advance except of the gats, before they prove you guilty they will treat you like a criminal. They tried to give me first degree, they said it was intentional so I had to get shhh together on my own.

The media was talking like I'm never comin' home, my moms used to talk together on the phone. She will say to keep the faith and you will eat that case. I'm in the zone all by myself. I'm alone all by myself, but I don't need nobody else but me, myself, and I, and God.

-Dirt

From The Beat: Your writing continues to get better Dirt, you've got a lot of great stuff in here. We encourage you to try and grow even more with your writing - try and focus it more. You talk about a lot of different things here, try sticking to one issue per piece, and really get it all out.

These Walls

Man, sittin' in these walls after so long gets hella burnt on account of cats in here hella fake. All they do is run their mouth and speak on stuff they don't know what the hell they speakin' on which makes me 'bout hella mad 'cause they act 'bout hella hard in here but then when you see 'em on the outs it's all ha ha he he laughs and jokes when it ain't nowhere near cool. Plus a lot of people are labeled scanless if they are found in a certain spot.

- Lil' Solid

From The Beat: We are so proud of you for getting out and going to college! We believe you can go a long way. Keep writing. You could take journalism and/or creative writing classes and develop the talent you have with words. We hope that on the outs you remember that everyone is just trying to find their way, and those who seem the fakest might be those who are in the most need of a strong friend. You may be in a really good position to be a strong friend, Lil' Solid. Stay safe. Stay in touch.

There's A Place For Me

A place for me would be in the tropics with blue clear water, soft sand, coconut trees, birds and seagulls fly around.

I see me sitting on the beach with lots of girls around me some massaging my shoulders and some keeping me cool with a feather fan.

-Slick

From The Beat: Would it be peaceful and quiet there, or would the group of girls prevent you from achieving real peace? What if you were alone on this beach... would that still appeal to you?

Time For Change

What's up with it Beat Within?

Today I'm writing about why I think it's time for change. The reason why I think it's time for change is because for one I'm tired of being in jail and I can't see my females or my main ninjas. Just recently I ran from camp with my main ninja Joe. And I regret running.

The reason why I regret running from camp is because now I'm up in this unit waiting to get sent back to camp. My PO told me the camp list is hella long.

- Jr. A

From The Beat: It sounds like you are being honest with yourself. We're glad you realized that sometimes it's worth just waiting it out. Real change takes time. You can do it.

My Life

Since Obama got elected
They say it's time fo' a change
But that don't mean shhh to me
Still I carry my thang
Even though he in the white house
The streets won't change
Ninjas still go hit likes
Robbin' stores for change
And lil ninja still gon' try to recoup on thangs
Until they get caught with a murder
And live they lives in chains
Some ninjas to me man ain't got no brain
Keep getting caught do the same shhh
Like the going insane

-Darnell

From The Beat: Obama getting elected does mean a change from the white house, but you're right - he's not going to come to your neighborhood and fix it. One person can't fix everything for you - but as a part of your community, YOU can make change. You have a choice to either help your community grow and create, or to be a part of the violence and destruction.

Peace Of Mind

I would like to be on the beach with a bottle of Patron chillin' by myself just looking at the waves come and go with no one around. That would be nice and peaceful... Just me by myself to have a peace of mind. So yea man, that's what I want.

-Jp Baby

From The Beat: Do you feel peaceful and quiet when you get drunk, or do you get loud and excited? Do you think you might feel more quiet and peaceful if you had something in your hand that wasn't hard alcohol?

Return To Yesterday

What's up Beat? If I could return to yesterday I would go back to the day of October 29 2004 because I said something that hurt me to this day.

This day is a peaceful day, but yet a difficult and emotional one too. I say that you should treat your big & little sisters and brothers with respect.

I regret that I said some of the things that I said before my big sister passed away. RIP Ronda

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: We all have regrets, and it hurts even more when you don't get the time to make amends. We're sorry you lost your sister, and didn't have the chance to reconcile with her. Maybe it would help to write her a letter, get out what you have to say to her.

I Wish

I wish I didn't do what I did to get in here.
I wish I was a better person on the outside and the lord can change me on the inside.

My life is all a wish, a wish that I want to come true.
Your wishes won't always come true
but if you really believe that you can make it come true.
My wish has almost come true and just a little more effort, it can be done.

I wish that I was with my family right now spending quality time with them.

I wish I didn't do what I did to get in here.

-Damar

From The Beat: Wishing is important, but it can only get you so far. You have to do more than wish - you have to do. Doing can make you accomplish your wishes all on your own. It can be done with that little extra effort.

Gangs

As I sit in my cell I start to think about my life and everything I have and everything I lost in my life-like my grandma and grandpa, most of my life to gangs, streets, but for what? For people that don't care if we die or live, all they going to do when you die is forget about you and try to get more people to get jumped in.

I've been down for a color but I've done a lot of shhh for that color... but at the same time I almost got killed -but to me at the same time it was like if I die my boys going to get them back, but it's not always like that. They forget about you just like they don't give a damn about me.

I'm over that BS cause I have a little girl that needs her dad in her life and I'm not ready to die, not until I see my kids have kids and they kids have kids. But there's no telling what God has in store for me because I can go to sleep one night and not wake up the next morning but that's what's up. I'm down but I'm about to bounce back.

-Young O

From The Beat: Glad to hear you're over all that. When you are released are you going to be able to just walk away? We're happy you put your little girl's needs before your own ego, and that you want to hang around to be with your family. Keep these priorities in mind when you are faced with decisions.

Untitled

Told Rony don't worry
we goin' get the last laugh
we got a lot of power
just do the math
Told Ed when he bouncing back
watch his surrounding
cause a lot of ninjas is shady
so I'm poundin'
Some ninjas need mascara
cause they stay clownin'
Told my girl I'm a dog
so I'm straight houndin'

-Bill Gates

From The Beat: We like the line about clownin' and mascara. We'd like to see what you'd write about the similarities between you and the other visionary Bill Gates, who believes that business can help communities as well as make money...

Stress About Someone

What's up Beat this ya boy Unknown again. I'm a talk to you today about I guess love/crush on someone. Yeah so here I go now.

Have you been in love before? Have you have had a crush one someone so bad but never told 'em? Now you're locked up and you tell her and she rejects you. Damn that's really wrong.

Well right now I asked this teenage girl out, her name is Mulina, and you know what she did? Rejected, and rather be an older play sister/real life sister, either one. You know how much that hurts me to hear her voice on the phone/her mail coming in to you in jail and she's not your girl and you think about it like damn, I'm feeling so crushed/heartbroken man

! So yep man I'ma talk to yah later man, got too much stress. I love you Mulina and I still want you!!!

- Sokthy the Unknown

From The Beat: Rejection is never fun or easy, especially if it's coming from someone you have very strong feelings for. Keep your head up, and just keep in mind that it's much better to find someone who cares for you as much as you care for them than it is to try and convince someone that you're the one for them.

If I could

If I went back to my life as a kid, I would start my life all over and try to do things better. Go to school and get better grades and wouldn't do all the stupid things in my life

-Ronyae

From The Beat: Sounds like you regret your past choices, and we hear that. You are young though and can still finish school and work hard and get better grades. You can decide what you will and will not do. You have to feel your life is worth the effort—and it is.

There's A Place For Me

There's a place for me saved in heaven. I wish my cousin G-Dubb and my ninja Vernon, they died young but I know that they are in a better place where there is no more pain, hurt, or violence. I know they are up there looking over me. God rest your souls. My time will come. I'm mobbing for you'll. R.I.P Vernon & G-Dubb.

-Lil Tone

From The Beat: This is a such a peaceful tribute to them. Since they lost their lives, as they look over you what do they wish for you in your life?

Missing Home

I am ready to go home I am tired of being in here with the people in here. I am ready to be with my family and kids and go out when I want to.

-Brother

From The Beat: Do everything you can to grow and develop yourself while you're inside, so you can be available to your family as a man when you return.

I'm Not Mad I Came Back

I told myself next time I come back I wasn't going to get mad and I'm not. I did what I did trying to get my money and saying forget the next ninja that's why I'm not mad for coming back to the hall.

-Krazy Dre

From The Beat: Well what good does the money do you when you come back to the hall though? Does anyone end up paying any fees or anything for the time you spend there? At least when you make slow money you don't risk also losing everything. Maybe there's another way, besides being mad, to think about whether or not you will return.

If I Could Take The Pain Away

Man if I can take the pain away the pain that I put on my moms it's hurting me inside can't you see the pain in my eyes look at it.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: We're sorry about the pain, your's and your Mom's. They say our emotions are a guide, to help us see the way in our lives, by feeling what really matters to us. Can you let the reality of this pain guide you to the life you want to live?

Better Recognize

One person that deserves much recognition is my mom because my mom has done so much for my brother, my sister and I. She would give the world to us, and I just want to let her know I love her with all my heart.

-Gilberto

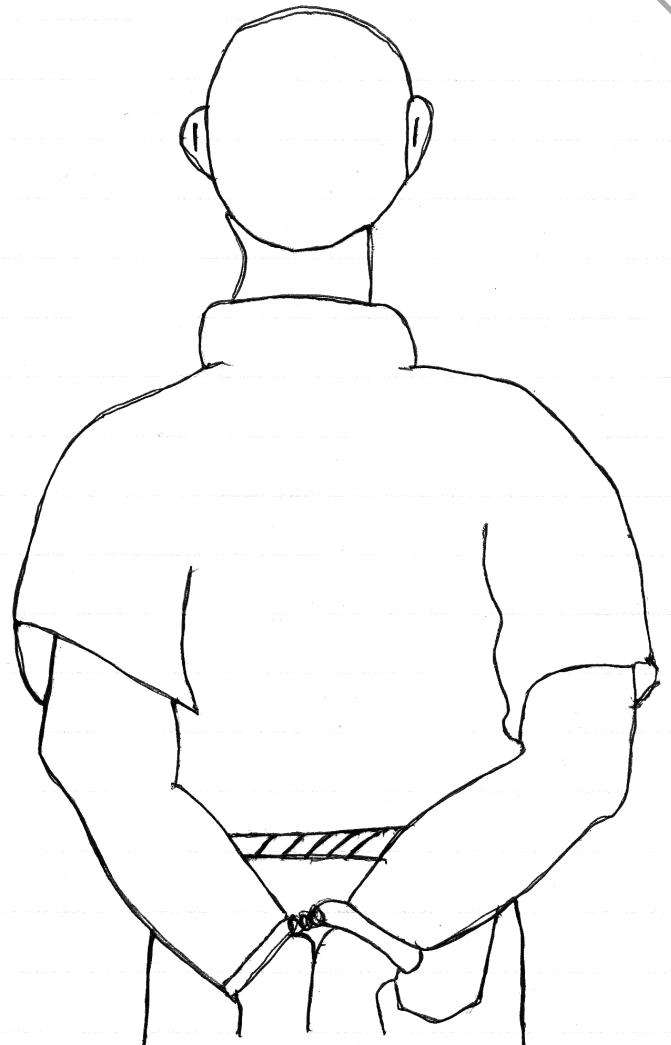
From The Beat: The best way to let her know is to show her. We hope you make the decisions in your life that allow you to communicate your feelings in real time—on a daily basis in your free life—and not from jail.

There's a Place for Me

The place is home, being home with my family and sisters and brothers, bein' happy—and I really want to be home with my granny. When I get out of jail I'm going to stay out with my family and not here with these people.

-D'Nice

From The Beat: It's sounds like this place already exists, you don't have to create it—you just need to get out and figure out what you have to do to stay there and not get locked up again.



Release My Mind

The Beat. Man hey Beat. I like it when you guys come cause I got to release my mind so that all I feel like writing.

-Fat Boy

From The Beat: Why don't you release a bit more? Let us know what's going on in that mind—sometimes it is such a relief to get it out, put it down somewhere you can look at it instead of hold it all in your head.

First Grader

I want to go back to the 1st grade so I don't have to fight and change my friends so I don't have to be in here.

-Duane

From The Beat: Did you get into fights in the first grade? What do you think you could have done to avoid them? If you could go back in time and give your "first-grader self" advice, what would you say?

Reaching Out

What's up with The Beat? I want to talk to The Beat 'cause I want to reach out to the youngsters. But yeah, let me tell y'all man, if y'all ain't built for this street shhh, man, stay out of this, man, for real, 'cause the end result to this is jail or death, man.

But I'm really one of them type of brothers, man, but I'm tryna tell y'all before y'all get into a position to where you like, "Damn! I didn't know my homie would turn on me or rat on me." I'm telling y'all, it get that gutta, man, so stay loyal to ya family and stay true to ya ya mean. But I'm out.

-Rocket

From The Beat: Do you mean there are some people "built for jail or death," but others who are not? We can't believe that. We believe we're all built for full lives of between 60-90 years, but that we make choices (bad and good) along the way, which affect that outcome. The advice to stay out of the beef is good, of course, but if you can't follow your own advice (if you think it's only good for other people, but not yourself), then why should anyone listen? We believe, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, "that all men are created equal." The only question is what are you going to do with that creation?

You Better Recognize...

What's up with The Beat though? You know me. I had to holla back, ya dig. Y'all betta recognize me when y'all seen me on the big screen. Naw...

On some real shhh, though, gotta give my condolence to everybody I love and miss.

-Mac Nyta

From The Beat: We know you're going to be angry with us for taking out most of the piece you wrote, but it reads like a list of RIPs which The Beat doesn't allow. If you want to write a piece about any of the people you miss in your life, we will print that, but not just a list of names of people who are gone. When we read a piece that names at least five people you know who have lost their lives at such an early age, we can't bear to put in the turf names and clichés — nothing more than dirt you don't own — that perpetuate this disease that's killing off your generation! We add our condolences to yours, and hope that the significance of their lives and their deaths will someone penetrate the one thing that distinguishes us from animals, our brains!

In The Life

Return to yesterday. Ha! Why would I do that when yesterday is in the past. Don't get me wrong. if I wasn't full-fledged I would say I would stop me from ever coming to jail. But I'm in this life and it's part of what you go through when you deep off in it. You get away with so much for so long, that when you do go down, you can't be mad. And if you do, just sit back and think of what you can be down for. But yeah main, I'm out.

-The God

From The Beat: You ask why you would want to examine yesterday when it's in the past. The answer to that question was expressed best by George Santayana, a Spanish philosopher and poet, who wrote more than 100 years ago: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." What do you think meant?

Fighting To Stay Out The Ranch

I wanna go back to my son. I can't because I'm going to the

Ranch. Hopefully I get to see him when I get out. Hopefully I won't get more time when I'm there. So far my concluding sentences, I'ma keep fighting in court so I won't go to the Ranch.

-Dennis

From The Beat: We hope you do get back to your son, Dennis, because by creating him, you made him your responsibility. That means you have to do more than "hope" you won't get into more trouble. You have to sacrifice some of what you like doing for your son who didn't ask to be born and now needs a father! Good luck.

To Be An Archeologist

Some day when I get older, I want to be an archeologist so I can be able to travel to different countries. I can find and dig up new bones and animals. Also, I can get to meet new people.

But yeah, this yo' boy Ricky, aka Flame you know I'm out this thang December 2nd. Peace out.

-Ricky

From The Beat: We don't know very many people, in or out of the halls, who want to be archeologists. How did you learn about this occupation? What countries would you like to visit?

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time, before I had a seed,
I was on the block with rocks and hella bags of weed
I've calmed down, I used to live savagely
Hurt feelings, killing, a lot of tragedy
Once upon a time, I had everybody mad at me
Hatas wanted to see them with it rather than me
But gradually I started havin' cash, ya see
And my real folks was glad to se me
We doggin' and doomin',
Stayin' true to the game and never ruined
You need nothin' else but Cal on the menu
(It's p.s. to be continued)

-Cal

From The Beat: How do you imagine your day-to-day life will be different now that you've "calmed down"? Do you feel that you are maturing out of childhood and into adulthood? How will that maturity affect your future? (We can't publish your second piece about being posted on the block and clapping in the streets. We admired the rhyme, but we won't promote gunplay in The Beat.)

Don't Know What's Going To Happen

Yeah, ya boy back. Delvaonta on this, mainly because this girl talking a lot about me to my main girl on My Space, and I'm not feeling that. She need to know her place and where she stand. But a ninja can't do nothing 'til I get out.

But the block probably hella different, and I just don't know what to do in this hall. They ain't tryna let me out. I don't know what they gone do to me. I just don't know. But whatever happens happens. I can't tell the future.

But Beat, I'm gone.

-Delvonta

From The Beat: Nobody can tell the future. But we can guess that some actions are likely to lead to certain futures, as other actions are likely to lead to different futures. Whenever we read, "I'm back," we know that the writer hasn't learned to avoid the same actions that first brought him here, thinking somehow that repeating the behavior of the past will lead to a different result in the future. It's not just your girl you can't do anything about while you're here, it's everything that goes on in the world. Think about it.

Can't Wait To Leave

Wha's up with The Beat? This ya girl Tae G waitin' for my PO to approve my transfer to the grouper. I'm missin' my sister she finna drop my nef-nef Juwan Jr. soon. So I gotta finish this 90-day program so I can be back on tha low in time.

Straight thuggin' in this hole. The judge been playin' ninjas these days. Like damn, ma PO, I ain't go stop grindin'! I'm gone do my time so I can get back.

-Tae G

From The Beat: You want to get back to grinding, and you're cussing out your PO! You might as well tell your PO that you like it here because you've announced your return ticket. No judge has to play you, 'cause you're playin' yourself!

Brief Family History In Rhyme

I'm locked up in the cell, yo, feeling like hell, yo
Police always wanna put a female ninja in jail, though
I'ma do the time 'cause, yup, I did the crime
But if I was white, they would never mind
I ain't go say it got me mine
On my side, best believe I'm go spry
Lightin' up some shhh 'til I die
And we getting hella high
It all started when I was four years old
Every time I turned around, mama wasn't home
Pops in jail every other week
Baby sis in the carriage crying herself to sleep
Sister on the sideline doin' her thing
Older brother on the sideline feeding the fiends
When I hit six years, things started to change
That's when my pops gave me my nickname
He called me Lil' Benzo
He yelled out the window
When I hit nine years, then I started doing the thizzle

-Twin

From The Beat: We had to take out some words because we won't promote guns in The Beat. (Also, we had difficulty reading your writing, so please take a little more time with it.) We're curious to know why you think you would get away with it if you were white. We agree that racism plays a role in the criminal justice system, but we also know, for example, that more than half the people on death row are white. How could that be if whites get away with it? Look at it this way: If you give the system the excuse it needs to lock you up by breaking the law, then it's hard for you to complain when those predictable consequences occur.

A Place For Me

What's up Beat? This ya boy Lil' Bra. A place for me is home. I think everybody belongs at home, not locked up. If I would have thought before I reacted, I would not be where I is right now. The thing that I would do so I don't come back is think before I react.

-Lil Bra

From The Beat: Good for you! Of course, saying you're going to think before you act is not the same thing as doing it. Be very careful. It's easy to forget.

What's Next?

What's happenin' mang? It's the one and only Lil' Dogg holdin' it down in this baby unit, ha ha ha. but yeah, man, been in this thang for like a month and like two weeks. Man, I'm hot dude. Can't see my fam, my friends, nobody but my roommate and these walls and the rest of these jerks.

You're talkin' 'bout, ey, but look though, I would change some of the things in my past. It's about what I am going to do next, you feel me? And I'm out.

-Lil' Dogg

From The Beat: Yes, it's always about what we're going to do next. For all of us. So tell us, what are you going to do next?

Skip's Broadcast: Place Of Peace

Chea man, I think a place for me would be in heaven with my grandmamma. I know she happy and ain't worryin' 'bout shhh, ya feel me. Yeah, it exists in reality, too if you believe it. I would be able to maintain it because all it is is peace and quiet.

-Skip

From The Beat: We've come to expect much more from you than this little bit. You say this place exists in reality "if you believe it." So, do you believe it?

Looking For A Birthday In Freedom

What's good with The Beat? It's lil Chris from the cuts. I've been in and out the halls seven times for the past two years, I'm not even 15, and I've spent two birthdays in the halls, and it's not that crackin'.

This year I'ma try to stay out for my birthday so I could get it crackin' with a tellie and some females. To all the young homies inside these bricks, stay up and get crackin' on the outs on your release date. Try to keep it cutty so ya'll don't end back up in this hotel.

-Chris

From The Beat: You give good advice about trying to avoid being a "guest" of the county. But can you be more specific with your plans? How are you going to "try and stay out" for your birthday? What will be different? What will keep you from coming back for the eighth time?

Did You Wrong

Hey Beat, this Banana up in here going crazy. This my song to my hubby. It's called "Did You Wrong."

Verse 1

I don't wanna lose this relationship so we gotta stay strong

Don't wanna move on

I know you're sick and tired of the fussin'

And the fighting and the cussin'

But I love you

You love me too

Chorus

I did you wrong...

You did me wrong...

I'll take you back...

You take me back...

I did you wrong, boy...

You did me wrong, boy...

I'll take you back...

You take me back...

No matter what chu do...

No matter what chu say...

No matter how far you go...

Don't take yo' love away

Because I love... you...

And boy, I want... chu

And boy, I need... you

So... Let's just work

It out...

I ain't trying waste yo' time...

And I ain't trying waste my time...

Ain't no need to waste no time...

'Cause we done put in too much time...

I ain't trying waste my time...

I ain't trying waste no time...

Ain't no need to waste no time...

'Cause we done put in too much time...

When you're in a relationship

The easiest thing fo' you to do is just to leave...

You gotta stick it out...

I'ma work it out...

I'ma stick it out...

I'ma stick it out...

'Cause at the end of the day...

(Repeat chorus)

Love

-Banana

From The Beat: You can't maintain a relationship while you're locked up, Banana. If you really want this to work, you have to find a way to stay out of here. If not, you will just keep writing sad love poems to boys while you are behind wall and surrounded by girls!

Take A Lesson

I'm a real ninja only spittin' facts
 Staying on ma SPIF, something that you lack
 Runnin' through yo' pockets only countin' rocks
 Police lookin' fo' my say, I'm hard to track
 Smoking fat blunts, hoping you cant mach
 Ma ninjas and my family, you know that I'm attached
 In the streets of San Francisco not tryna get smacked
 Take a lesson from me:
 Jail a place you don't want to be
 Me, I gas at full speed, life's no movie

-Burna

From The Beat: We had to take out a line or two in which you used references which we did not know so cannot include. Still, we like the message that jail is a place you don't want to be. So, what do you plan to change so that you don't have to be here again?

This Ain't Cool

Man, you know who it is. It's Delvonta. I'm still in this place. I don't know when I'm getting out. I go to court on the 25th of November. I called my girl to work my problems out with her, and she was hot. But it's cool.

But me, I'm good just chilling in this thang, stressed out. I might be in here for my wife' birthday and Thanksgiving, and that's not cool. But man, I have my girl and these girls be gossiping, keep claiming they know me. She mad and I can't do nothnin 'cause I'm in jail. But when I get out, it's a rap. That's why I ain't trippin'.

-Delvonta

From The Beat: We think you'd be spending your time more wisely if you focused on the things that cause you to hand your freedom away, so that you can work on those issues you need to change if you want to change the consequences. Getting out is guaranteed, but staying out is not.

A Better Place For Me

Every time my mom visit me, she'll say
 There's a better place for me:

"Don't waste your life inside of YGC
 Always keep your head up, never down
 Down wanna be six feet underground"

Can't wait until I could get out
 Nobody like each other because of different lifestyle
 School is the place where I wanna be
 Behind on school work but people still believe in me
 Kids show off so they could be the person they wanna be

Like my dad said, "You do you, and I'ma do me"

-Hunter

From The Beat: We like your mom's advice best: "Don't waste your life inside of YGC!" The fact that you want to be in school tells us that your head is in the right place. Now, make your body follow!

Hatin-Ass Staff

Yeah, I'm up in this YGC thang surrounded by these shady staff. I been here for almost five months. But it ain't nothin'. I can do a couple of years. I just keep my head up and think positive. But some of these staff be dogs! Some of these staff are some real clowns! Ha ha. But I ain't trippin'. I'm just gonna do my thang.

-C-Rider

From The Beat: The fact that you "can do a couple of years" as a slave doesn't mean "it ain't nothin'." It's always something when you put yourself in a situation where you're no longer in control of your own life, but instead, are taking orders from strangers. (That's true whether you're locked up, or taking orders from shot callers on the outs.) You can avoid the nasty staff you're complaining about only one way, and that's to avoid putting yourself under the staff's control.

Going Back

If I were to go back to a time, I would go back when I became a teen because it was cracking. Me and my homies just chilling, smoking a little bit of nothing, you feel me, drinking. But now some of my homies got deported, and some of my older homies are doing life for some dumb stuff.

Now it's all dead and silent where I live and I kick it. It ain't cracking no more. It ain't no fun any more. I wish I could go back.

-Trucho

From The Beat: This is a very sad description and a kind of warning that the "games" you play as children have consequences that carry over into adulthood. Since you cannot go back and resurrect the past, how will the tragic events you've seen happen as a result of "dumb stuff" change what you do when you leave this place?

Rabbit Pets

If I was to go back in time, it would be when I was 9 or 10 years old. I was livin' in South San Francisco. I used to go to Hillside Elementary every day. I used to get out of school, rabbits used to come back to my back yard. Like three or four rabbits used to come. I would get one, feed and keep it until another one would come.

-Mr. C

From The Beat: Do you mean that you would actually catch wild rabbits and feed them? Or were these tame white rabbits? Have you ever thought about working in a veterinarian's office, or something else that involves working with animals? Sounds like something you'd like.

There's A Place For Me

There's a place for me at my 'hood. They would always accept me. I always show respect to my 'hood. If you disrespect my 'hood, you better expect hearing from me, no matter what.

Let me tell y'all what happened to my cousin. He went bad on the 'hood, saying that we ain't about our shhh. So every time we see him, we give him the ass whippin' of the month. Only reason I haven't take it to the next level is because he's my blood, or would've been game over for him and whoever in our way

-Kreepy

From The Beat: Well, you definitely did NOT write on the topic we asked about. What we described in our topic was a place of "peace and quiet and open air," and what you gave us was a place of noisy violence and threats. We're so glad you didn't take your anger at your cousin to 'the next level' because then it would have been game over for you, too. So, we're waiting for you to take your maturity to the next level... before you find yourself deep in a box living adult consequences for childish decisions!

I Been Missing You

What's up with The Beat? It's yo' boy, Thizzle, down here at the Ranch. Man, I miss this special person in my life. Man, now that I think about it, I shouldn't did what I did, because I miss my girl. Now she out there by herself. Every time I get a phone call, she be telling me hella shhh, like she need me out there with her when times get ugly, like right 'bout now. But one thing for shore, I know she holding me down an' I love her for that. I'm go be home in a few.

-Thizzle

From The Beat: Your lady sounds like she's loyal and down for you. You're a lucky man, because it seems like you can trust her. When you're home again how will you be there for her? She's let you know she needs you there, not somewhere away in the juvenile justice system. Can you give up whatever it is that brings you inside for her? For anyone you may have hurt? Change whatever, especially for yourself?

Thanksgiving At The Ranch

What's good wit' The Beat? It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, up here at the Ranch, just chillin' and shhh, ya dig? So, yeah, I just wanna say, "Damn, another Thanksgiving, damn. And another Christmas! Phony, man. First time being locked up and I got washed (played).

If I was home, all my family get together at my uncle's house, eatin' big. Everybody cooks—my mom cooks chicken adobo, lumpia, and everything good—Filipino food. My uncle makes American style food—prime rib, mashed potatoes and home-style gravy with big hunks of meat in it, not that nasty ass store bought gravy. I cook Asian rice and give money to my momma. I let her get some money I saved up in the bank. Yea. Yea, I have a bank account, even though I was locked up.

I got locked up in late '07, the wrong time of year. I was fightin' my case for three months, then I was found guilty, so then they told me to choose either going to Glen Mills or the Ranch. I ain't feelin' going all the way across the country, so I chose the Ranch, then I came up to the Ranch in February, '07.

I don't know what we'll do for Thanksgiving this year. This Ranch hella boring.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Did you guys at the Ranch get family visits for Thanksgiving? If so, did your people come up to be with you? Do you or anyone at the Ranch get one-day home passes for Christmas? If not, will your family be able to come see you? Will you be able to make gifts for your family in carpentry, shop or an art class? Last year you spent Christmas in juvy—what do you think and/or hope your Christmas at the Ranch will be like this year? Next year, when you're back home, how will you have changed your life on the outs to be sure you'll stay free?

It don't take for you to get shot to realize that you don't wanna be shot. So if you in these streets, take yo' life serious 'cause that's all you got to live for.

What It Do?

What it do? What it be?

I need to eat, so where the beef.

I am a beast, tell me what chu see.

Young savage dog from head to feet.

I been 'bout it been wildin'.

We runs in pack, these wolves howlin'.

It's funny how shhh turns out,

How ninjas want beef 'til they live burns out.

But yeah, you ninjas is cats but I'm a dog.

I see you, I bust, no time to stall.

Where them ninjas, where they at?

I got a gun, you wanna see? I'll be back.

-Canon

From The Beat: If your last line means you'll be back locked in this zoo, then it seems like that's what you're prescribing for yourself. We had to take out several lines that you, an old Beat veteran, know are not appropriate (about the "heat" that got you here!) You asked the reader to tell you what we see (and then you proceeded to tell us what you think we should see). So, we'll tell you what we see: a cub who thinks he's a full-grown tiger, who has yet to open his eyes and realize that no matter how strong his body or long his teeth, he's still a captive animal in a zoo, depending on his keepers to feed and care for him. We like you a lot, Canon, but we're hoping you grow out of your kitten stage and realize that the most powerful weapon you possess — if you ever choose to use it — is your brain! Until you do, you'll just remain that cub in a zoo.

Time To Switch It Up

Yo, yo, yo... What's poppin' with The Beat? Word to godson: this shhh is maaad crazy, straight up, kid. It ain't new to me, though. Same shhh, different day. I think it's time to switch toilets, ya dig?

I been in an' out this G-thang like sex, yo! No joke, pure dope, no soap, ya hea' me? It's messed up but ahhh... What can I say? It's all on me. I'd be a victim to blame somebody else, and I ain't neva been that. Pure beast, all dawg, no leash, ya hea' me? Huh?

Check me out, though... I really gotta switch it up. I got kids to feed, and that's really real. Let me get up outta hea', though. Hey you, be home in a San Francisco minute, maybe.

-Jae Bae Bae

From The Beat: If it's the same shhh, different day, then it's not just time to switch toilets, but to switch diets, ya dig? You may be a "pure beast" (whatever that is), but this beast is dependent on a bunch of zookeepers to put your meal on the table, decide who you "live" with, when you can growl and when you must be silent. That's a beast on a very tight leash, even if you hate it. So, yes, switch it up before it's too late — for you and for your kids!

100% Real Ninja

Come on man, this that ninja Bax ah Billions. Real ninja every day. A dawg for all my real ninjas, thuggin'. I'm here to let chu know... for you ninjas out there tryna run these streets, it ain't the place, lil' Jit. It don't take for you to get shot to realize that you don't wanna be shot. So if you in these streets, take yo' life serious 'cause that's all you got to live for. And you could put that on everything.

-Dooda

From The Beat: We know you're not going to be happy when you see what we took out of this piece. But when you include numbers and names we don't recognize, we have to be very careful. If you want to explain what those numbered clowns really mean, that could make an interesting piece...

My Place Of Peace And Quiet

Yes, I can imagine a place of peace and quiet and open air. Yes, there's a place like this. My example of this would be the country life. Living in palms and fields. If I could create a place like this it would be almost like the countryside. I would share it with my friends and family, and all the people that had a positive impact on my life...

-Jacky

From The Beat: Have you ever experienced a place like this first hand? What's your plan for moving out of the present turmoil of your life into this quiet and peaceful place? (Once again, we urge you to choose a single topic, not all three, and write as much as you can about the one topic you choose.)

To A Sexy Woman

A woman that's attractive, sexy and smart
Is the key to a man's heart

Mentally flexible, willing and able

Damn, girl, looks like you are the one for me

Having those three qualities can get you very, very far
Not only in a committed relationship, but also in achieving your dreams

You definitely got my attention and my protection

You are the cause of yo' ninja's erection

-D-Boi

From The Beat: To be honest, the "realist" part of this poem is the last line. Don't let that erection lead you to believe love is in the air. We understand what's on your mind (and on the mind of every adolescent boy), but that's far from the hard work that's required for "committed relationships." Enjoy your youth, but don't confuse sex with love.

When I Get Out!

When I get out, I got to go to a grouper. The last time I wrote, Beat, I was supposed to get out on the 10th of October, but the DA played me. So I got to go t a grouper for 8 months to a year. But I'm cool about it, though.

As soon as I get out, I'm going back where I started at. I'ma run the streets. I will finish school, but I still be a young goon. But I'm up in JJC for robbery. I'm sorry for that. I'm up in here for 10 years to 25 years. But I'm good. Lata Beat.

-T's-Isaiah

From The Beat: We can't tell from this whether you're about to do 8 months in a grouper or 10-25 years in the pen. What does that last sentence mean? All we can tell you is that if you go back to running the streets, you will face more of the same that you're dealing with now. Your choice.

58 Days And Counting

What's good with The Beat, though? I ain't really feelin' the topics. It's been 58 days in here. Nothin' been poppin'. No fights. No al-night hypes. Bangin' on the doors... Nothin'!

Time's been flying. People coming in. people leaving. No beef for me. Well, not yet, at least. I been doing me. No rivals in my unit. You already know there ain't.

-Taliban Rascal

From The Beat: We had to take out your last sentence, an unnecessary and childish threat to rivals who might come to your unit. Stop thinking of what you're going to do to your rivals, and start thinking about what you're going to do in your own life so that you won't have to be a slave to strangers telling you what to do and when to do it... In other words, use this peaceful time out to move beyond the past, when you were a child, into a more responsible future as an adult.

My Lady

Me and my lady together, man, it ain't no stoppin'
Don't trip off what these girls say, they all jockin'
Light skin, long hair, yeah that's my type
And we don't gotta, we could cuddle all night
You the one I wanna be with the rest of my life
Yeah, we go good together, naw, we don't even fight
You the one I wanna marry and have some kids with
I'm with the shhh, you with the shhh
A ride or die chick

-Man-Man

From The Beat: Finding someone to love is a wonderful thing, and we hope this works out the way you want it to. But do us a favor... as long as you're both down to "ride or die," don't bring kids into your life. Be responsible enough to postpone having children until you're ready to be a real parent, and that means no longer running the streets!

Like A Caged Bird

If I could turn back and go back to tomorrow is me coming into YGC. If I could change back to tomorrow, I would have a different state of mind in being the best I could be in achievement. I realize by being in jail I can't be the best because I'm like a caged bird that sees freedom but cannot extend my wings and fly to the top of a mountain peak to achieve all the goals I set my mind to.

When you look into my eyes, you see the gates of hell, with flames cooking ninja's souls with fire, but a heart that's filled with greatness, passion and desire. Every day I live life in greatness, but I see the end of time is awaitin'.

-Davonnte

From The Beat: We're interested in that heart "filled with greatness, passion and desire." Can you write about what you want to accomplish with that greatness? Can you tell what your passion drives you to do? Can you explain where your desires will take you?

Thanking My Family

What's up with The Beat, though? People in my life are very touched and respectful. I care about them, and I'm thankful that they support they give me through my life. I really appreciate what my family has done for me.

-Dora

From The Beat: We know your family would love to read this note of gratitude. Of course, you have to back your words up with actions, showing your respect (by staying out of here) as well as expressing it.

CYA Bound

What's good with The Beat? This yo' boy V-Guttah holding it down in the max, ya dig. Anyways, I'm goin' be gone on Friday, going to CYA to start my two-three years bid, ya dig This time ain't nothing to a big dog like me, ya dig ha, ha, ha. I know all the staff and them phony ninjas.

-V-G

From The Beat: Well, we want to ask you AFTER you've done your two-three years at the Y (plus whatever additional time you'll get for fighting, because that's how they set you up there), if you still think that the time you're giving up to strangers who control you "ain't nothing." We hope to hear from you.

A War So Cold

Growin' up in a war so cold
I found a solid chick
Been together fo' so long
Now I'm all on my own
My money brought her pain
'Cause the way I was livin'
The last chapter of my life
It hurts to think she ain't in it.
Only God knows how much we been through
An' how much a ninja love her
I'm a loyal ass ninja
An' can't stand them hatas
I'll reunite wit' the block
'Cause ain't shhh else workin'
She's my other half
But half of me is gone
I'm a soulja
And she was supposed to be my compass
Guiding me home
My life is different
Just like Dwayne Wade
An' if you want trouble
Then I want the same thang
I'm gonna ride wit' my ninjas
'Cause anything else seems worthless
Life is too short
To keep doin' the same thing
Over and over
I gotta get on with my life
I'm like weed
I'm gonna always be around
'Til I get smoked
But even then
I'ma be in the air

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: With or without this lady who has been loyal to you for so long, as long as you think that going back to the streets is an option if you feel the rest of the world has failed you or you have failed within it, you may not pour your whole heart in succeeding the whole world. Are you convinced yet, that you will die, kill someone and/or spend your life in state prison if you revert to the streets? Or will you somehow make it, no matter what guts, humility, and hard work may be required of you, and live and thrive in the world at large? You're about to get another chance at freedom, and maybe to be with this lady. What life will you choose?

She Made Me Tough

If there was one person who I did not recognize that has helped me more than I knew, it would be my cousin. She has roughed me up enough times that I seemingly would hate her. But what I didn't realize at the time was she was really trying to toughen me up. She was preparing me for the street life in case something should happen... for instance, getting jail time...

-Jacky

From The Beat: Let us repeat our request that next time you choose just one topic to write a lot more about. In this one, for example, we would want to know — if your cousin was "preparing" you for the street life — why she didn't prepare you well enough to avoid jail time!



Rule 1

What's really with The Beat, man? You know this Boo Bear (ha). They got ya boy on BMP, man, but you know, holdin' my own, keepin' my back to the wall. But I'ma let y'all in on a tip — we in a bad environment and we surrounded by the fakes. We got Jake the Snake out there, so to you dudes who real, stay doing you, man. Keep ya head up. Ya boy gone hit The Beat up later.

-Boo Bear

From The Beat: When you "hit The Beat up later," we hope you spit some real knowledge and not the same old thing about "doing you." Tell us if you're planning to change anything about how you live, and why. Give us something real! (By the way, no shout outs in The Beat.)

Welcome To The Ranch

What's up with The Beat? It your boy, Grimy, up at the Ranch, chilling, not letting time do me, you feel me?

To all up in the hall, knock your time out, man, and get out to the street. Man, you feel? You already know I'm a keep it gangsta up in here, you feel me? They don't call me Grimy for nothing. Ha! Ha! You feel me? I'm glad I'm out that weak ass juvenile hall.

Man, they had me on BMP (room time) for hella long. But, anyway, man, I'm out to go to the weight room and get big up in here. Man, you feel?

To all, hurry up and get out so we could be back at the street.

-Grimy

From The Beat: We had to cut the part of your writing when you described mess in the system, but we hope you'll do well, make some new friends, read lots of books from the library, play basketball and baseball, go swimming in the summertime, and enjoy the wild deer, raccoons and turkeys at the Ranch, do your program and go home on time! You can do it!

Back In This Thang

Man, what's god with The Beat? Yeah they got ya boy, D-Boom, back in this thang, and it's really shhhhy for real, ya dig. But it seem just when everything's going good, some shhh always got to go wrong.

A young brother got touched down like three months ago. Now I'm back. It ain't shhh to be proud of, not at all. But ya ninja go be out this thang sooner or later, ya dig. But to my bras all ova in jail or on the block, one love.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: We're sorry you're back, D-B. You're so right about getting out of here sooner or later, but then what? How will you use what you know and what you are learning to keep yourself free? When you say, "some shhh always got to go wrong," it sounds like you have no control over the situation. Is that the case, or are there things you can (and should) do to keep those things from going wrong?

Return To Yesterday

I would love to return to the past 'cause no one likes to be locked up. It hurts to be in a cell mostly all day. It just a waste of time. You won't like sleeping every day so old, so sick, feeling wired with all this madness. But shhh happens.

This ain't cracking. You feel like crying, and more better be hiding on the outs with no trouble, with all that mumbo-jumbo stuff.

-Henry

From The Beat: Sometimes, crying is the most appropriate response to a situation. But after you're done crying, you should spend some time thinking about how to keep yourself out of this place and any place where you have to take orders from strangers. No, it's not cool being here.

It All Went Wrong

If I were able to go back and reverse a decision, I would go back to the one Wednesday when it all went wrong. That night, I had a real bad fight with my mom. Since that night, me and my mom were giving each other the silent treatment. Sure, she would tell me that dinner's finished, but that was it. Three days later, she told me we had to have a talk... That was the day I got arrested...

-Jacky

From The Beat: We have to say a couple of things about this. First, we bet you could go back even earlier than the Wednesday when "it all went wrong." Like, what led up to this blow-up with your mom? And what was she so upset with that it led to your arrest? And what do you plan to do to change this picture when you get home? We think that if you wrote about just one topic, and not all three (as you did), you'd be able to give us a lot more details. That's what we'd like next time...

I Forgot About My Problems

Well today I don't have anything to write about, but I am till going to write about something. Well, today I want to thank The Beat for bringing us burritos. I had a good time and today I forgot about my problems because everybody was joking around. I will always remember this time when I get out. When I see the homies, I am going to reminisce about this time and joke about it. Because even though I am locked up, I still have fun and don't stress.

-Stomper

From The Beat: We are so glad we were able to bring you some relief from the stress of being locked up. A few burritos is a small price to pay. We, too, will reminisce about how good it felt.

2 Respects To The Homie

Well, first and foremost, I would like to give my respect to the homeboys. This the homeboy G coming at you from the max unit. Well, I told the homeboy I'd show my love and respect before he goes, so here it is.

Well the homeboy is getting out tomorrow, so I hope the best for him. That's cool he is getting out. I look at that fool and hope I'm as lucky as him. He was in here for some serious shhh and he beat his case. That kind of gives me hope. I hope the homeboy don't come back. I got a feeling he's going to do good.

Well I hope the best for you homeboy. I got much love and respect. This goes out to H-Man.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: We also wish the homie the best and, like you, hope he never comes back to a place like this. Beating your case is an accomplishment, but not picking up any new cases is an even greater accomplishment, and the only way to "beat" the system!

There's A Place For Me

A peaceful and quiet place that I like to go to is the cemetery in Stockton where someone very close to me is buried. All right, that's it for me on this topic, writing from Santa Clara juvenile hall. I want to say I love you to my lady Lauren, all right then, peace Beat.

-Danger

From The Beat: What exactly about the cemetery do you find soothing or peaceful? Does it make you happy to feel close to a departed loved one, or do you find the quiet sleep of the deceased peaceful? You tell us that this cemetery is in Stockton—does it represent a place like home to you? We're intrigued by this choice of a peaceful place and want to know more about what makes it special to you.

Thanks

Well, I would like to give thanks to The Beat Within. Tonight they have provided the whole B-8 with burritos, and I would like to give my thanks out to Dave for giving his effort.

Well, Thanksgiving is coming up next Thursday, and I would like to wish all my homeboys a Thanksgiving and tell them to stay up. You know, lately I have been having a lot of thought about my life and where this sentence is going to take me. I think about my familia and my barrio. I miss it all so very much. I was a street soldier and now I'll be a soldier in the pen — big-ass difference.

Well, a little piece of my mind. Alrato.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We wish you weren't "Unknown" because we'd like to acknowledge your thanks. Yes, there is a big difference between the "soldier" on the street and the "soldier" in the pen, but they both have one thing in common: all soldiers take orders; they are followers, not leaders. We hope that with the time you will have, you will think about becoming a soldier for yourself, both leader and follower. In the meantime, good luck!

Choices

What's up Beat. It's me S, how has everybody been? Me cool, I've been chilling like a villain.

Well anyways, today's topic is about return to yesterday. Well, if I could change things in the past I would like to change what I said to my mom, and that I could never come in here 'cause it's boring and the sandwiches are nasty. But I would have never met David and Laura.

-S

From The Beat: Thanks for the shout-out! It's hard to decide what you would change about your life, because by erasing bad things, you'd erase good things that came out of those bad things. Since you can't erase it, how can you show your mom that you regret what you said to her? How could you use your time on the inside in a way that would make her proud?

Better Recognize

The person that I recognize is my mom because she is the only person that is there for me. She comes to my courts, and she picks me up on my release dates instead of leaving me in the hall. If it wasn't for her then I still would be locked up instead of getting out then coming back in.

-Nelson

From The Beat: It's amazing to realize that there are people who love us no matter what, isn't it? And not only that they love us, but that they're willing to show us that love. How could you recognize your mom in a way that she could see or hear?

There's A Place For Me

There's a place for me to have peace and quiet and that is my house. Juvenile hall is not a peace and quiet for me. At my house I can think, imagine, and kick back without anybody telling what to do. The place for me is a place I wish I was at right now instead of being locked up in a cell all day.

This place for me, I won't see it for a few years because I am going to CYA. This place is the only place I want to be at right now. When I get out in the future, this is the only place I want to be at to stay out of trouble.

-Chico

From The Beat: This is one of those situations where we don't know what we have until we lose it! We hope that when you do get out of the Y, you'll be able to return to that place of peace and quiet — and never lose it again!

My Hood

What up Beat? Well, I'm gonna write about a place where I go to be in peace and quiet. The place I go for peace and quiet is in my hood. I just walk around by myself, and just look at the scenery, and just trip out on how beautiful my hood is. I just patrol it and make sure nothing is going on that my hood I don't know about, and just go to one of the schools and sit there and think about all the things I did in my life and all the homeboys that are gone.

Well, that's all I got. I want to say what up to my primos.

-Soldierboy

From The Beat: Here's a question: how do you find peace and quiet now that you can't go out and walk your hood? Have you found it at all since you've been on the inside—is there a way that you've found to find it within yourself? What's beautiful about your hood to you, and what parts of home do you think about when you can't be there? We want to know more about what's going on inside your head—at your most peaceful times, what do you think about?

Untitled

What up Beat? Today I will like to write about my time in these two max units. Well, it all started with a bottle of E and J. Some shhh happened, and that led to my arrest. I was a first-timer at juvenile hall, did not know really what to expect.

The first hour they had me in this cold-ass room with no mattress and a bright-ass light. Then I saw this jerk as counselor that told me my charges — attempted murder! He tried to scare me, telling me that I was looking at some serious time.

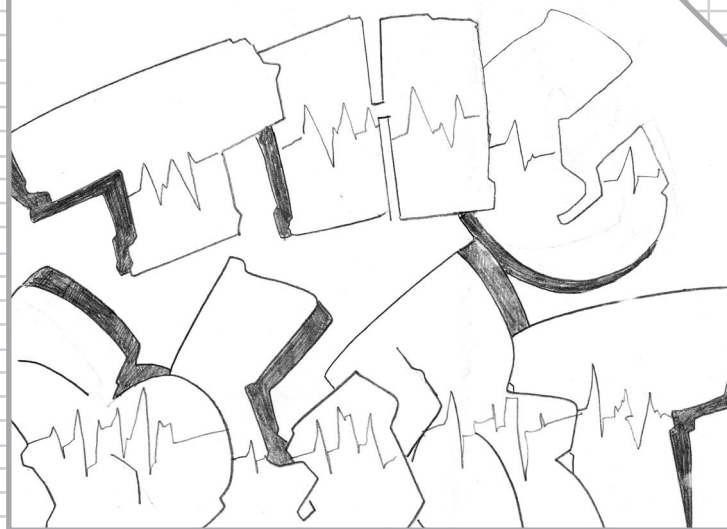
January 4, 2008, I came in the unit. I was in there for like four months, then got transferred to this unit. Well, to make a long story short, I got tried as an adult. I was lucky because I had good support by my parents, got a good lawyer and this should be my last Beat.

I'm getting out! I just want to thank The Beat and all the homeboys. I had good times and bad times, and learned much while being locked up.

Well time is running short. Late.

-H-Man

From The Beat: Do you now how many sad stories we read about that start with a bottle of E and J? We say that because we worry that if haven't learned THAT lesson (the one that tells you to stop drinking), then you might find yourself again facing serious charges. No amount of drink is worth it, so we hope... We have enjoyed having you in these workshops, and we're very happy you beat your case. You can continue to write to us, if you want, and we'll publish your pieces in the "Beat Without" section. For example, you could tell us about what you've learned here, and how it's helping you stay free and move forward with your life. Thank you for all your writing, and the best of luck.



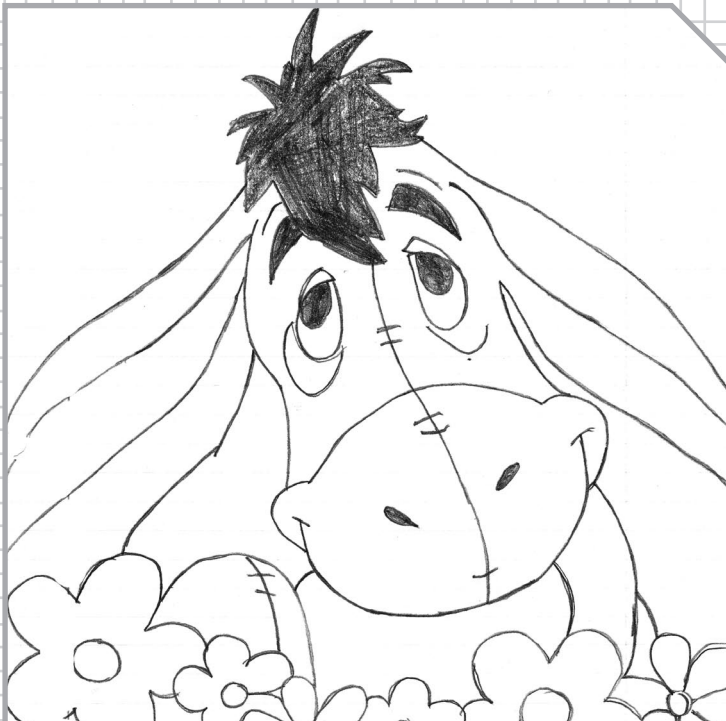
That Halloween Night, That Halloween Fight

If I had a chance to go back in the past, I would go back to Halloween. I would stay home for that night. But instead I decided to go out. I went to a keg party. It seemed like fun and games. Before I knew it, me and my boys in front of the house fighting the whole party.

We were fighting for about five minutes, then we started to leave. Everyone was in front and I was the last one in the back. All I remember was turning around and I got hit in the mouth with a rock. It knocked out my front teeth. I went to the hospital and they put my teeth back in. It hurt. I had to go see an oral surgeon. I paid them 600 dollars for them to fix my teeth and put them back in place. And that's what I would change if I could go back in the past.

-Monkey

From The Beat: We don't blame you for wanting to change that night, and not lose your teeth! Of course, it's much more than just that night. If you get drunk, you know the chances are very high that you will end up doing something you regret. So, since you cannot go back and change the past, we hope you've learned enough from this sad experience to think about staying sober. It's worth it!



I Miss My Boo

I miss my boo
She sticks like glue
She's so cute
Maybe cuter than you
Can't wait to see my boo-woo

-Jose

From The Beat: So what are you going to do to stay out with your boo? What's your plan?

A Mobster's Life Style

I live a life style that some say is beyond belief
You never know what to expect when you walk these violent streets
I've witnessed bodies drop cold dead leaving puddles of blood on the concretes
If that's not psychotic, then tell me what is?
We live a never-ending cycle with new generations of kids
No matter how much people try this game will never stop
It just keeps ticking like a clock
All I ever wanted was to be a mobster that never drops
But eventually I got caught up by these corrupted cops
These days I wake up every morning to a door that's locked

Nevertheless, I maintain my composure because I know
One day I'll hit freedom and incarceration will be all over...

-Nightmare

From The Beat: The game may be never-ending, but individuals in the game can end their part in it. We hope you will think about that, because we all know too many young people whose lives have come to an end long before their time, even though the game continues. We also know many corrupt cops, but aren't there also many corrupt gangsters? What makes one group's corruption more acceptable than another's?

Things I Do

(First Verse)

See I'm a G on this gangsta track
I'll take your girl today but tomorrow I'ma bring her back
With scratches on her back and burns to her eyes
Tattooed on her breasts and you and you know it reads
Chai

Baby girl got it goin' on like something proppa
I ain't done, Shawty was fly so I had to stop her
"Excuse me miss, how do you do and can I get your
name?"

You know my face, you know my voice, you know my
'hood, my game"

The one and only up on these, no suckas 'round here
And California is known, it's going down here
I'm from the ghetto, so hell is the most incredible
Since an adolescence, I've been doing my thang
White tee, fresh jeans, with a gangsta lean
Yadadimean, I can't be stopped, I'm way too hot
So lean with it, bounce with it, let your body rock
(Chorus)

Is it 'cause I'm a gangsta
That makes me do the things I do
Could it be my walk, my talk
Or my gangsta attitude (ooo)
Is it 'cause I'm a playa
That makes me always act a fool
See, I don't know, but fa sho, I'ma roll
Baby do what it do (heeyea)

(Second Verse)

Now verse two, get it crackin'; I been ready for action
Can't nobody else do it like Chai
Forget all those who be asking my name
Be the "C", "H" at the end put the "A" and the "I"
But they don't really comprehend what's goin' on
I'm takin' all them storms and with the tracks and blow
'em on

And roll them on till the crack of dawn till all night
I know it's wrong, but God damn, it's feelin' so right
I get them bouncing and clownin' so everybody throw
your hands in the air

And dip, you got my proper guarantee that you're sorry,
man, Nina boss just don't care

So make way for the new breed
Mang, I'm rollin' all out suckas can't see me
But they wanna be me no doubt

So go your own route

And I take the hot role

Keep pushin' my buttons and all you ninjas are liable
That's what I ride fo' mang, I'm just being me
What's my freakin' name?

(Chorus)

Is it cause I'm a gangsta
That makes me do the things I do
Could it be my walk, my talk
Or my gangsta attitude (ooo)

Is it 'cause I'm a playa
That makes me always act a fool
See I don't know but fa sho, I'ma roll
Baby do what it do (heeyea)

-Saetern

From The Beat: We can't say that this is one of our favorite Saetern pieces (we had to take out one line from the first verse and change a word or two... too graphic!), but we still have to admire your word skills, even if we're not crazy about the contents (we always have trouble with the "can't be stopped" message, when it's so clear that "stopped" is exactly what you are!) The difficulty with coming to those places in our lives when we can go one way or another is that we have to choose. You can celebrate your "gangsta attitude," or you can adopt a new attitude that changes your course. What you can't do is both at the same time.

The Place For Me

The place for me to get away from life is my room. My room is very peaceful cause nobody could bother me. I could lay down peaceful and listen to music all day if I wanted to.

-Lala

From The Beat: It sounds like you're craving a retreat into someplace where you can do what you want—we don't blame you. How else do you, or can you, find peace in your life?



Change For Mom

Dear mom, all I want to say to my mom is that I love her and that I will change my life for her because she really wants me to change. So that's what I would do for my mom, that's all.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Hey Anthony, if our memory serves us correctly, this entry was written during your first session with The Beat, so thanks for trusting us with your thoughts. What specifically do you think your mom wants you to change about yourself or your life, and do you agree with her that it'd be a good idea to change those things?

Return To Yesterday

Que onda Beat? Well I'm going to write about "Return to Yesterday." If I had to return to a certain time, I decide to return to when I was in 6th grade, because that's when I decided to hang out with my hood. That's when I started to get in problems. Well, asta la otra.

-Jose

From The Beat: So what would you do upon your return (and, we might add, we think you're brave to want to return to the beginning of puberty)? Would you make a different choice than the one you really made? What kind of problems did that choice lead you into?

You Can Run But You Can't Hide!

We all run from situations we don't want to face. There is never a time we run without knowin' the case of why!

When we run we feel different emotions and sometimes we run for the good, but we also run for the bad.

When we feel hurt, angry, scared, confused or unsure is when we are bound to run, but that is the time we should stop and think and ask ourselves "what are the consequences?"

We all have to option to run but there is no point in running because eventually we all get caught and if not it will follow us forever. The one question we should ask is "Who are we hurtin'?" If we think about it we are not only hurting ourselves but the people around us, so why run when you can't hide? Our lives can depend on it!

-Demitrez

From The Beat: Your right the only way to fix or solve problems is to face them head on. At first it will be hard, and you will hate every minute of it, but in the end you will be happy you dealt with your problems and didn't run from them.

What seems to be easier?

Life inside these walls to me is where I'm used to being at.

My life of being on the outs is a twisted street.

My life to me, I feel more comfortable being institutionalized because I have lived my life hard and I am so used to being caught up

and in and out of the detention center and not able to step to the base

of success. Every time I do good and I come so close to receiving what I earned

I always do something to sabotage it and I always wonder why

I do it but I can not picture the reactions

of the people around me and I wouldn't know how to react to the success

so I mean for me it's easier behind these walls

because the outs is so corrupt and there is always going to be

somebody or something that I will have to face,

but I don't feel safe being in an open environment

because there is no structure out there and I'm used to the structure because it helps me and yea! That's bout it. Peace!

- Smilez

From The Beat: It a shame you feel that you are institutionalized. Do your best not to "sabotage" yourself, so you can live a full and happy life. Focus on the good and not the bad in your life.

Running

Running away doesn't change anything or make life easier, it only makes things worse. For me running didn't do anything, I left to get away from problems or to hide my pain, but while I was gone my pain got worse. All the guilt I felt or am feeling ain't ever gonna change or go away.

I've ruined and changed lives through out the way, well I took a long journey in and out in and out, but this is my last cause this time I ain't going home I'm going away for good.

- Kristen

From The Beat: Unless you have committed a very, very serious crime you are not going away for good. Right now the best thing you can do is take life one day at a time and just do your best. Keep us informed let us at the Beat and the readers know how you're doing.

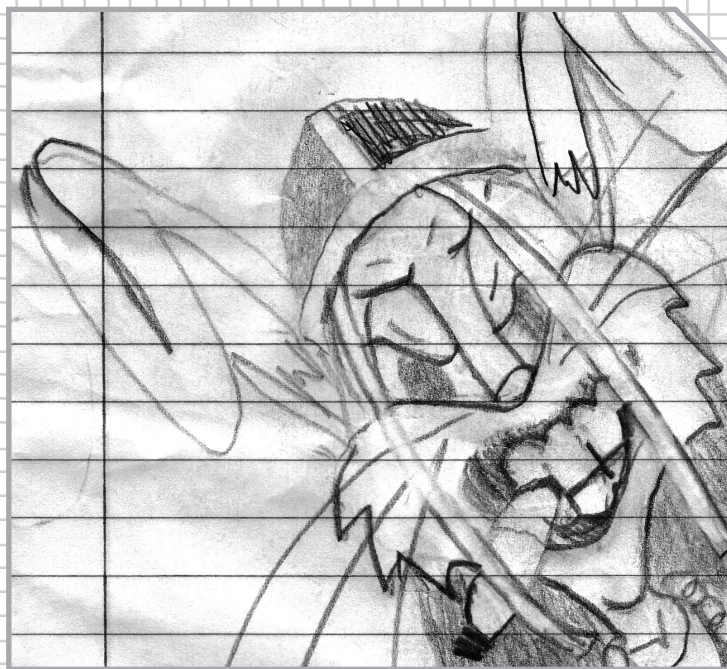
Life

Well I look at life this way, life is what you make it, you choose to live it or destroy it. Life's all about choices, people don't think for you, you think for yourself, so what you do is on you not the people around you. Life is easier on the outs when you know you can do right, and you have a home and a family to go to, but once you do wrong your screwed then when your doing your time or probation and your doing real well and your loved ones or people who care, and tell you that your doing great or congratulations you don't feel that you can keep doing good. You got to do wrong so you self sabotage.

Then it hurts so bad to know how close you were to the end then your back in the d-home, so take advantage of what you got and make life worth living because you don't know what you got till it's gone.

- Kristen

From The Beat: "Take advantage of what you got and make life worth living because you don't know what you got till it's gone." This last sentence you wrote is better then anything we could have said.



Free

Released! I get to be with my family, today. I guess I got my Christmas present. I had a lot of support here at JDC from Case Managers to CO's, but I'm gonna be on house arrest and I'm not used to being out there.

I wanna continue with writing to The Beat Within. I'll be looking up your web site.

It's so easy here, you have less a chance of picking up new charges here. You don't have any worries except when your gonna get out. But now I have more worries about getting caught up for some dumb stuff. I can do well if I have the right motivation, so I'm gonna put it down for all my people in a jail cell.

Keep your heads up, ya, I know that easy for me to say.

-Joseph

From The Beat: You can do well; you have it in you to do well. But now the question to you is do you want to do good so you can be with your family and not behind bars? By all means do look us up and keep in touch with The Beat, let us know how you're doing and how you're doing on the outs.

One of them Days

Well today is just one of them days. Man, I'm tired. I'm tired of complaining and I'm tired of waiting. Waiting for another court date, waiting for another day. Waiting to start my time.

This is so tiring. I'm bored with nothing to do. I feel so lonely. I can't express the feeling. I'm stressing because of the next court date. I just don't want to do anymore but pray, day, noon and night and sometimes I feel he is not even listening. Deep down I know he feels my agony and pain. But you know, I got to let the past go.

Once court is over, it'll be easier for me to swallow the past. This is a nightmare that I want to wake up from. I'm sweating and out of breath. Trying to stay above water level and far away from these sharks.

-Poundcake

From The Beat: We hear you. God's always there. Sometimes the answers aren't what we want. Stay down and keep your head above it and your nose out of it. Some people pull us down. Take advantage of the time. Put it to constructive use.

For My Love, Kelly

I want you to know I have deep feelings for you and I want to be with you right now. I don't know how you feel about me. It's okay if you don't feel the same way right now. I just want you to know how I feel about you. I hope one day you feel like I do and I hope one day we can be together.

-Love Fatso

From The Beat: Good luck Fatso. We commend your courage and forthrightness in declaring your feelings. We wish you the best of luck and if it is meant to be with Kelly then it will.

Finally Getting Out

What up ya'll it's the one and only young Kash. I Just wanted to let ya'll know that I'm finally getting out. It feels like forever that I have been in here. When I get out I'm going to finish school, also I'm not coming back. 'Cause a young ninja gotta have a future. And yes Beat, I'll have a job in my future. Peace out.

-Kash

From The Beat: You have great goals sets for your future. Finishing school and getting a job well keep you busy and way from negativity. "Good Luck"

Easier Life

My life has been hard out there. I've been through things I didn't want to go through. My mom worked worked day and night. Only time we see my mom was in the morning and weekends. Every since I was thirteen, I had to be a mom for my sister and brother. I had so many responsibilities that I did not want to do. I just wanted to be the sister.

I turned fourteen and I started chilling with the homies which felt like me. My life in here has taken so much weight off my shoulders and now I feel happy inside and for some reason, I don't know what it is but there is no knot in my heart. Now I can just think of me and nobody else. One thing I do know is that my mom made one strong daughter even though she doesn't see it.

-Janete

From The Beat: We feel children should be able to do children things and teenagers should be able to do teenage things but it's not always like that. Sometimes, a child or teenager must raise themselves and be the parent for themselves. These people must make the decisions that are best for them. We suggest they seek out people who can give them good advice. There are people out there who want to help others.

Doing Time

You can't let it get you down. You'll be out one day. Better sooner or later. Just don't think about your family and it will go by faster. Don't completely forget about them just don't think about. Do your time and don't let it change you. It's nothing but time.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Life is nothing but time. That's all we have is time. On our deathbed as old people it is more time and health we wish for. Make use of this time and don't forget sitting somewhere waiting for time to go by, is not the best use of time.

I Was Me All Along

All my life I've been doing something that I recently realized which was running.

What was I running from? Where was I running to? Why was I running?

What was the rush? Was I trying to get away from home? Was I trying to get to the streets?

Was I running because I was being chased or was I in a race?

Was it because I was running from the cops because I just hit a lick?

Was it because I needed to get the next hit?

What was I running from? What was I running to?

Why was I running? What was the rush?

So I recently realized that it wasn't to get that next hit or because I hit that lick.

I wasn't being chased or in a race.

It wasn't that I was trying to get to the streets and away from home. What I recently realized is that when I turned around it was me I was running from all along.

-Debra

From The Beat: We hear you. How many years we were running from the one thing we couldn't escape, the reality of our life and situation. It wasn't until we stopped and took a realistic, honest look at our good and bad qualities that we were able to start improve and drive our life in the direction we want to go. If we don't know what we're working with then we don't know what we're dealing with.

Who Am I?

Am I Ivory or just this teenage girl?

Am I important to you or just another somebody in this world?

I find myself asking the same questions as the days go by, and still to this day

I am asking... who am I?

-Ivory

From The Beat: We wonder, are you asking who am I to yourself or to someone else? We have to decide who we will become, we can not be what others want us to be. Be true to yourself and others will respect you as well.

Life is Easier on The Outs

I think life is easier on the outs than being locked up. The reason why is because you have better things to do and worry about like for example, being with my baby and family. Why I say this is because I am in here and I can't do anything. The only things you can do in here is eat, write letters and talk. That's basically all you can do in here. That's why I think life is better and easier on the outs than in here.

Well until the next time Beat Within.

-Adrianna

From The Beat: Yeah, nothing beats freedom and having the opportunity to do things that's why we do the things that give us more options like working at a job and getting an education and saving some of our money so we can buy a house some day.

Life on The Outs

Life on the Outs is easier because you get to do what you want whenever you want. Also being in the outs is easier. You don't need to listen to no staff.

The people that you need to listen to are you parents or your homies. It's also more easier cause you can do what you want to do without anyone yelling at you or watching you. There's more but I'll stop here. This is why I think the Outs is easier.

-Pro Outs

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing but we know there ain't no place where you can do whatever you whenever you want. There's always considerations and demands like having \$\$ and knowing the right people and there's always consequences for all our actions whether we take them or not. Oh and let's not forget the police and the IRS and the landlord.

Life Is Like War

I put my family through so much; it hurts me to know how much I have made them cry. Why is it that every time you get locked up you realize that you really care about your family and your health, and the food you eat, but when you are on the outs you don't give a shhh about anything. I feel so frustrated with myself and I also hate myself for everything that I have done to myself.

I have been and done so much to my self and to my family. I just want to change. When I get out it feels like I am going to go back and do the same dang things, but I don't want to. I want to have faith in myself but I just say that it is too hard to fight for life. This life is like a war.

-Haylee

From The Beat: It is easier to do the right thing, when the right things are presented to you in a way that you have no other choice but to do them. It takes courage and faith to choose those things, when you have the option not to. Where can you find strength from to help you make those choices when you get out?

The Beat

Dear, The Beat Within I was just wondering how it would be like if I was serving death row in a state prison? How would the food be like? Is it nasty? Is it good? Well from what I hear it's nasty! If I was in prison I would try to stay to myself, but you know how that is. Join a gang or die! Or become someone's girl. That's all for now, peace till next time.

- Chris

From The Beat: Dose the thought of serving a life sentence scare you? You're worried about the food, and joining a gang. We know your just wondering what it would be like, but we know this isn't the life you want to imagine.

Swallowing My Pride

I have swallowed my pride many times especially in here.

I prefer swallowing my pride than saying anything to get me into trouble 'cause I want to go home but there are some girls that make me want to tell them shhh

like this one little girl talking shhh about my friend losing her baby but I didn't want to say anything because I really want to go home.

-Focused and Determined

From The Beat: We realize that no one enjoys swallowing their pride. We don't but sometimes it is necessary to achieve the goals we want. We sacrifice certain things in order to accomplish other things. People like to exaggerate and say they have it all and they can have everything but this is not realistic. Life is a negotiation and in the end, ultimately everyone will concede.

UPS For the Underground Tag Squad

Life of the mopper in Fresno. love, sweetness, respect and family. We do magic 24 hours a day making friends and being helpful in the neighborhood.

Peace out and live strong and big hugs for everyone.

-Vokes

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your thoughts. We accept your positive thoughts and send them right back at you.

Freedom Is Out There

Which is easier for me is life on the outs because I have family and friends out there I can hang out with. But it's dangerous on the outs cause there are gang members and bad things but at least, I have friends and family that can take care of you and you can go to school and the mall. I can do a lot more things on the outs.

When I'm in here I just stay in my room and come out for rec, and when we eat or when we take a shower or going to school. Out there, you're just free. You have your freedom.

-Rachanny

From The Beat: We love getting out and going around, seeing people and doing things, doing whatever we want. Family and friends that's the good stuff that makes life worth living. Sitting in a room reading a book can be cool but hour after hour, it gets a little old. Yeah, nothing beats freedom, right?

Me and My Cousin

Well Beat I'll like to write about me and my cousin. My cousin and I are always together, but one day we split. We split because he got locked up on his probation meeting, I was sad. But two days later, I got locked up so I felt better because, I seen him in court. But, he was mad at me because I came in and I did something he didn't like.

So I felt like me and him will never hang around and see each other. Because he got more time than me. But I wanted to tell my cousin at court that I got more charges for tagging on a building. I see my cousin as my brother because he bought me a lot of things and gave me money. So I want to thank him for all the things he bought me.

-Swed

From The Beat: being away from a family member can be very difficult. We hurt when they hurt; however, when they get in trouble that doesn't mean one has to join.

Love

Love is something special like taking your first baby step. People say that looking for love is hard just like looking for a blue rose. Love is a miracle like having your first baby, or your first kiss.

-She Marie

From The Beat: Something that we realize as we get older is that in order to really enjoy loving someone else, you have to love and respect yourself first.

RIP My Brother

My brother is dead, and I don't like that some man took him away from us, but it's okay because I have more brothers. I miss him a lot though but he is dead because he was in a gang.

-Momo

From The Beat: Losing loved one's to violence is a hard thing to deal with. We are sorry for your loss, and hope that you will find the strength to do good things with the life you still have when you get out of the hall.

Soul mate

From the moment I saw you, I knew I had to make you mine. I didn't know if my mind was making tricks or if my heart was telling me a lie. From the day I was born, you were the reason for my heart beating.

I stay up all night, staring at the moonlight, because my soul can't sleep, wondering if I'm ever gonna have you in my life. Whenever I close my eyes though, I can see you standing by my side. I think about all the time that you and I spent together and the furthest that we got was in my dreams.

And if you ever do become my girl I'm gonna treasure you like a sacred gift and never give you to the world. That is a promise that I am going to keep until I hit my grave. Even though I haven't seen you, I miss your touch every day.

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: Being away from those we care about is hard, especially when they want us to do good for ourselves. What can you do to take care of yourself so you can be there for others?

Changing For The Good Or The Bad

I've been here two times. This time is really different. The reason it is different is because I really want to change. I just don't know how. I know what I want to do with my life. I know when I get out of my 63 day commit (which isn't shhh to me because my last time was 7 months)

I'm going to go back to school and I want to get my H.S. diploma, I also want to get a job and to stay away from all of the old friends and the shhh I was doing before. Because I know that shhh will end up killing me. But something holds me back from changing, and I don't know how to stop doing what I do. I want to change, I really do but I just don't know what steps to take. I'm so confused.

-Nicole

From The Beat: We know how hard it can be to find the right things to do to head down a new path. Change is hard, but we think that it is easier if you pick out small steps to take and take it one move at a time. What are the smallest things that you can do to get on your way?

Lost Chances

I am seventeen years old and in March I will be eighteen. I had the chance to do a drug program. I fricked it up though, and now I am in the Hall waiting to be transferred back to the county I came from. I have blown all of my chances, and now I will have to do sixteen more months and I will be lucky if I get another chance.

-Griselda

From The Beat: Dealing with consequences of our Actions is hard to accept. Keep your head up and keep trying to learn from your mistakes and the consequences will start to fall in your favor.

Time In The Hall

Well, I have been in here for almost two and a half months now. My PO came and told me that he thinks that he found a foster home for me to go to. But I think that he is not for real, because he told me that over a month ago and they never came to get me like he said. The agency told me that they couldn't find one for me, so I don't believe him now.

-Haylee

From The Beat: We think that your PO is trying to do the best that he can, and we wonder what it is that you are doing to improve your chances of getting more option once you get out? What are you doing to help him help you?

Mom

I am so sorry for the things that I did. I know that you love me a lot. I just want to ask you to forgive me for everything that I have done to you. I am sorry for being in a gang. Just please never forget that you are always the number one mom and that I love you very much.

-Aurora

From The Beat: It's good to tell your mom that you are sorry, but how can you show her? What can you do on the outs to make up for the times when you didn't show it before?

My Life

My life stinks because I am always getting locked up for dumb reasons because of the way I act, and my reactions to everything.

Sometimes I don't like being in that place, having my mom wake up and go to court really early. I just want to be a free man with no probation and to stop coming in here.

-Salvador

From The Beat: it takes small steps to make big changes, sop what can you do to accomplish your goals?

God is The Only Way

Sometimes I wish that they would make a place for lost souls,

Other then giving them away to the cross roads.

Banging the block, is that the better way?

Somebody tell me why it is funny when a brother prays?

On his knees, asking God, can he be forgiven?

Can God take away all of his sins, and his way of livin'?

He tries to change, but how? He is so confused,

He's got a picture but still missin' certain clues.

He grabbed a bible and held it close and faced it,

But even though he knew God, he never held a relationship.

Don't have to speak but can spiritually complete a sin,

So every night he tends to pray and then attends the Beat Within.

But still it is all a test, depending on the way people behave,

No more pain, no more stress, look close, this boy is saved.

I met a wise man before and all he said was "pray,"

And when I did it, I found out that God was the only way.

-Nate

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing with us. We appreciate your perspective on faith and would like to here more from you in the future.

What I Think

Look, I don't think that Barack Obama is black. He is a mixed race and therefore I don't feel that he is black like I am black. I see his skin color, but I know that he is not fully black so I do not look at him like he is our new black president.

I feel like the only reason that they are saying that he is the first black president is because white America will not accept him as white, therefore he is black. But black people should know that Barack is not black so stop saying that he is.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We think that many communities are proud of our new president, regardless of his race or color, and look forward to the say when those things don't matter.

So Screwed Up

I cannot take this crap anymore. It seems like every day the room gets smaller, like it is closing in on me. I ain't got nothing to do here, and this is not changing me into a better person. I feel like a caged animal and the food might as well be dog food. And then some of the staff really they think are the police, and the court won't let me just say that it's screwed up. Like how all the Judges are white, and the DAs and the "public pretenders" are too. Also, the "public pretenders" (which are supposed to be on your side) are friends with the DAs and the Judge, and they will give you more time.

-Rb

From The Beat: It is frustrating to be stuck there, the room, the staff, the food, the judges and lawyers—but please don't give up! No matter what happens, no matter how frustrated you become, remember you still have your whole future ahead. Don't let the system get the best of you. When you have a bad day there, what do you do to cheer up?

Decisions

What do you want baby? Let me know if you want me or not. It's hard for me to wait for you when you don't look or talk to me. Baby, I can do everything for you but you don't even notice. I really really want to be with you. I waited and waited for you but you never told me yes. I see you with another girl and it breaks my heart to see you with her.

I turned around and ran from you. I wanted to die right then and there. You saw me and you tried to stop me but I kept on running and crying. I wasn't ready to talk to you. You called me to tell me that you love me but you are still with her. So what do you want?

-Bethany

From The Beat: Love is hard to deal with, especially on the inside where you don't have the freedom to do what you want. Keep your head up and learn to love yourself, and others will fall in line.

A Perfect Place For Me

There's a place I would like to be, which is at the temple. It's a place of peace and quiet for me, where I can think and not worry about my life. It's a quiet building that just has monks and Buddahs sitting around and meditating.

Stress, that's the main reason why I need and want to be in the temple. It's a place where you don't have to stress about anything or even worry about watching your back. You can just sit and no one will bother you and the things in there will make you feel comfortable and calm.

There are statues, pictures, and a place for you to sit all day comfortably. Here is a place to relieve stress and to feel the calm in your life, the temple.

-Meak

From The Beat: It sounds like you have found your own special sanctuary. In a world as chaotic and as stressful as ours, the temple sounds like a place where the soul can reflect, be calm, and feel peace. Thank you for sharing your inspiration with us.

Not Supposed To

I am not supposed to love you.

I am not supposed to care.

I am not supposed to live my life acting like you care.

I am not supposed to wonder where you are at and what you are doing.

-Rachanny

From The Beat: it is not wrong to care for others, and when you tell yourself that you can't do something, you will probably want it even more. We would like you to ask yourself what are you gaining from changing the word supposed to, to choose not to?

Locked Up

I am locked up, fricked up, and so stressed out that I am pulling my hair out. Waiting to get out, blowing my mind out, getting crazy in here, and never forgetting, never really remembering what has happened.

-Ashley

From The Beat: We would really like to hear more from you. We would like you to share yourself with us. Sometimes when we open up to others, we open up to ourselves and begin to heal.

The Life You'll Never Know

Sometimes we wonder why life is the way that it is...

Why do people get caught up in situations like this?

Why do people constantly kill each other?

Why do some kids not know their mothers?

Why do people die?

Why when something hurts, people often cry?

Why is the world made this way?

Why do people feel the way they feel every day?

Hopefully we will find out when it is our time to go.

But until then, this is just the life that you will never know.

-Ivory

From The Beat: These are hard questions to ask. And sometimes focusing on them too much can make it hard to have faith. One way to deal with the bad in the world is to make more good in it, and leave less room for the bad to exist.

Change My Life

First of all I never got a chance to change my life. But when I get out of here I'm going back to the hood and I'm going to do what I always do when I get out. But sometimes I do feel like changing and I'm going to try to change my life when I get out of here. And I have to change for my mom because she's the person who gave me this life. I have to show her that I'm grateful for the life she gave me.

-Bryan

From The Beat: Congratulations on realizing the need to change. That's the first step in actually making a change. Now ask yourself, what is it that you want to change about yourself? Finish school? Find a job? Once you've figured that out, then you can lay out an action plan with concrete steps. Good luck! Write to us and let us know how it goes.

The Block Is All I Know

All I know is the block, can you check my vocab, I'm headed to the top, Yeah your boy is so bad, You know that, the feds trying to take me under, The judge is throwin' strikes, like the sky when there's thunder.

A hundred times I have bussed my number, Keep that shhh live, live life in the summer time.

I act strange 'cause in this world I am all alone.

Don't like talking much, so I speak with my chrome.

Tell me, can I be wrong? Can my mind be mistaken?

All the lives I have took, and still for the taking.

I want my bacon; I'm married to me wesson,

The block is what I am reppin',

Any disrespecting and homies got to go.

Please don't ask me questions, 'cause the block is all I know.

-Nate

From The Beat: We would like to hear more about what it is like to live on the block. You may not like speaking, but the things you know can help others learn something, if you could share your story with them as well. AS for your marriage to the gun, don't be a fool. This lifestyle will bury you. Wake up!

I Love My Gma

I love my grandma.
I love my grandma when she makes me happy.
I love my grandma when she tells me to be a good person.
I love my grandma when she comes to visit me in the JJC.

My grandma, she loves me like I am her son.
I want her to be my mom.
I love her so much that I don't want to make her sad because of me.
I am sorry grandma that I make you cry. I hope that you still love me like before.

-John

From The Beat: That's the thing about Grandma's isn't it/ We are lucky to have those people in our lives to be there when others can not be. How can you honor this woman by your future actions?

Love Letter

It was really nice to hear from you. Your little love letter touched me. If you notice, I am still in here, but don't keep your hopes to high, I'm still near.

I am going back to dad; yes I am still happy and feel like I got my family back. Don't worry 'cause we are going to always keep close.

-Kellz

From The Beat: We are glad that you are staying upbeat and that you have people who are witting to you in the hall.

The Eternal Sky

The sky is cool. The sky is blue.
I like looking in the sky cause that's where everyone goes when people die.
I try not to cry. I don't know why.
When I lie, tears come from my eyes like rain from the sky

-Shante

From The Beat: We must strive to keep our heart open. The world wants to singe it shut. We must be courageous as we work to keep it open.

What I Want

I want to get out and stay out and never come back again.
How do you feel about being locked up for a long period of time?

-Wolf

From The Beat: What can you do to make sure that you don't have to come back to the hall again?

Things Happen For A Reason

I got locked up because of some crazy crap, but things happen for a reason, so I ain't even trippin. I've been here for a couple of week and I am already bored. I am right here chillin with the homie, just watching each others' backs. I am a gang member, and I was raised in the streets of Fresno.

I went to court a couple of days ago and I got sentenced to boot camp. I am going to try to do good so I can go back to my family cause I miss them a lot.

-Serna

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon. It's tough being there, and at boot camp. Do you feel as though you were meant to end up at JJC for a reason? What is that reason?

Me And My Man

I truly love my boyfriend and I believe he loves me too. He tells me he loves me and he expresses it in more than a million ways. I'd do anything in the world for him and it's the same with him.

Not long ago I found out I'm pregnant. So many things go through my mind; excitement and nervousness at the same time but I know it'll be alright.

I love my boyfriend and he loves me too. Soon it won't just be me and him; we'll be a family. I can't wait to get out of here and see him again. I don't feel right without him. It's like I'm not complete. I wait for the day I can look into his eyes and hear him say, "I love you babe!"

Only 5 days to go. I love you always Mike.

-Mayra

From The Beat: It is always good to have someone we love and who loves us. We hope it works out for you and in 5 days you are able to reconnect with your love. Make sure you don't forget about yourself. It's great to get close to someone but it's not enjoyable to be smothered.

Second Chances

I'm locked up but I am leaving soon. I feel that it is going to be way better. I am going to give up a lot of my bad habits. I am going to make my life a lot better and I thank God for a second chance.

-Outta Here

From The Beat: it is great that you have new goals in mind for when you leave! How can you make plans to see these goals through to the end?

Wishing I Was Home

I know that I am here for a reason.
I have made a mistake and I am willing to change.
I want to go to school and to get a job.
I want to stop this life, and get away from these pimps.
It's easy to jump into cars to make money but I want out already.

I want to be a woman that my sister can look up to.
I want my family to be proud of me instead of looking at me and crying.
I'm tired of this life.

-Nicole

From The Beat: Sometimes the easiest things in life are the worst for us. It takes strength and belief in the fact that you deserve to be treated better to have the courage to say no more, and take a different road. Keep your head up Nicole, respect yourself, and good things will come when you reach for them.

Done Running

I'm going to write about that I'm going to another group home next week and the sad thing about it is I am going to San Bernardino. It is a few hours away from here but the good thing is that if I do good, I will go home to my lovely Grandma and my dad.

The reason I have to go to a group home so far away is because I kept running away and going to my boyfriends' house. I can't live with him because he is too old and too bad. So that's why I have to go to a group home. But a good thing about it is I can go home if I do good. That's my story. I get to go home for good and this time I'm doing good and staying in the group home this time.

-Jessica

From The Beat: We hear you and we know how tough it can be but just sit tight and do the time and go home and live happily ever after. Obviously running ain't working, right? We know how tempting it is to go over the wall but nothing changes. Everything only gets worse. Some things we can't run from.

People Cry For Me.

Hi, my name is Amber and I am a young teen. If I could change time I would never come here in the first place. I would never have committed the crimes I did because the consequences are too bad but I pray to God that I get out and when I do, I'm never, never coming back in my life.

People tell me it's very stupid I come back over and over again. My mom is very sad because I'm in here. She cries every night. I'm not only hurting myself, I'm hurting my family that loves me a lot. People cry for me everyday when they say I'm locked up.

-Amber

From The Beat: Sometimes it is easier to just take the pain but we have to stop and think when our destructive actions hurt the ones we love. Changing our lives and living in a better way is not easy. It takes work. We wish you well.

Jesus Poem

Jesus is good, Jesus is great!!!

He keeps me safe, and I'm not the devils bait.

His words are true, He is kind.

If you seek His word, Him you will find.

He is my salvation; He sets my path through stormy winds.

He holds my hand, and washes my sins.

He heard my cry, when I had called.

I can't take it anymore, because I'm locked up in the hall.

-Quinton

From The Beat: Wow this is a great poem! You express yourself well, being positive will take you far in life.

I Should Have Stayed Home

If I could change back time I would have never committed my crime. I would have stayed home like my mom told me. I would have told my friends I can't go out today. If I would have listened I wouldn't be in here today.

-Danielle

From The Beat: We identify with you. We all make mistakes and do things that we wish we never did. It's important to learn from our mistakes and to implement a new way of thinking and acting so that we do not repeat the same mistake. God bless and good luck.

Alone But Not Alone

This is my second time in here. I went to court in November. Mo mom and grandma was not there. I wrote my mom and grandma everyday for about a month now. I've gotten one one visit and no letters.

-Hyfee

From The Beat: Family is suppose to be supportive and positive but sometimes they drop the ball. We wish everyone had a good family but many don't.

The Mansion

In the song, Thug Mansion, by 2Pac, he describes a paradise, a place where all the true Gs go, a place where you don't have to worry about the fake wannabes. A place to chill and live life like it is supposed to be lived. Where money and everything else means nothing. Where you don't have to be rich or poor and colors don't matter.

If there is a place for me it would be with Pac and all the other true Gs that have passed into Thug Mansion.

-D

From The Beat: Sounds like a true paradise! Do you think this place can exist on earth, or is it only a place you feel in your heart?

What I Miss

I miss my family but I have committed a crime so I will not be seeing them for a while.

-Zack

From The Beat: People make mistakes, and this time alone may give you the chance to learn something from your mistakes. Good luck.

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry for the things I've done to you.

I'm sorry that I hurt you so much. It started to hurt me.

I wanted to keep you safe and I failed you.

I'm sorry I made you cry.

I'm sorry I got you mad.

I wanted to be with you always but it never happened.

I think of all the good things we had and all the bad things that happened between us.

I'm sorry I was mad at you.

I'm sorry that I wasn't the one to go instead of you.

You will always be in my heart. I will never forget you.

I know you will be set free and to RIP.

I'm sorry truly. Sorry for everything that happened but I can promise you this.

You will be set free.

-Bethany

From The Beat: We have been in a place where it was seemingly inconceivable that we would ever one day forgive ourselves. Time, prayer, experience, conversation and more time eventually smoothed it out and we were able to come to terms with our situation. It was important for us not to punish ourselves repeatedly. Even a convicted criminal only gets one punishment. We are only to serve one sentence and at some point we have to free ourselves. We must be set free.

About A Boy I Love So Much.

I love JR so much and if I was out, I would be at his house all day with him but I love him so much. If I was out I would be at his house doing good stuff with him. We want to have a baby but I am in JJC. When I get out of here I am going to him cause we want a baby girl or boy. I love him so much, I can't wait to get out. I will go to his house and make a baby. I love him so much.

-Momo

From The Beat: That's great that you are in love. Love is a powerful experience but it is also a strange force. One day it is as strong as the sun and the next day there is no sunshine. Our hearts change. A baby however, will always be there. We suggest you get your life and skills together before you go making a baby but as always, we wish you the best. Love can be a mighty splendid thing.

Making That Mistake

Here I stand in a place I never expected to be. I'm seven weeks pregnant and a single parent of one already. Wishing, I could make things better but I don't regret it. Just wishing I could have made better choices in my past. I thought I was doing good but like I said, what I did in my past brought me here today.

I never was expecting it and if I did have a wish, I wish I could turn back time and I would choose another path. What can I say? What I did in the past made me who I am today. A better person would stand up for every reason that happened in my life and be stronger as everyday I live to tell my story.

-Nancy

From The Beat: We're not going to sugarcoat our reply to you because it is important that you get accurate feedback. There are those that have been in your position. It is important that you get support and seek out mentors and people that can help you make the best decisions. This is a serious situation and the stakes are high but there are others that have been through this. You are not alone. We are here to help you.

I Want Out

Well, when I get out of here I want to go home. Well, I'm not going to go home. I am going to go to group home or instead of a group home, I would rather go to a foster home. I am not going to be able to go to my home for a while. Everyday is a different day for me and everybody else and I want to get out of here so bad. Some people in here like this place and they do not want to get out. I don't know how people could like it in here.

I really want to be out for my birthday which is January 28th. Well, that's all I have to say. There's probably more but I don't know what else to say right now.

-Elisa

From The Beat: People become institutionalized. They get into a system and they get used to it and then they become dependent on it. Break the cycle and skip that groove. You don't need to bust that move. Break out by changing your ways and ways of thinking. Thoughts make actions.

Me In Here

I am locked up for vandalism, violation of my parole, and robbery. Now I regret everything that has happened to me.

When I get out I am going to be good and to not get into trouble. I just want to be with my family. My little brother is like my son because I raised him, and taught him how to walk. I really miss him.

I really miss all of my family members and that is all I have to say for now.

-Danielle

From The Beat: What exactly will you have to change when you get out. Saying you will change is easier then actually doing it. If you make a plan, others can help you reach those goals, but you have to start the work for yourself. So what will you do first?

Barack as President

Honestly, I highly doubt anything will change with Barack as a president. He may change some laws, but taxes and gas prices will go up. He isn't in total control as others are.

The reason why he was ever elected was so that people wouldn't continue their racial guesses about the government. But don't be fooled we will still see hardship ahead of us. Barack says "it's time for change," but sadly change is not in his power. But as I always say, the power for change is in the people's hands. We just have to stick together and bring this corrupt government to its knees.

-Robert

From The Beat: We encourage young people to become leaders and to support leadership. We also encourage young people to share their political views as to promote positive change.

Turkey Day

It is rainy and cold
but the weather doesn't matter.
Rain, sleet, snow or hail
won't change your mentality
when you're locked in and stored away.
Heat or cold will not determine
the attitude you'll hold.
I've learned it's what you make it
in this black hole.

-Poundcake

From The Beat: So true. We are the ones who determine our reality. In any situation there are those who are happy and those who are sad, angry or mad. We choose how to react to our everyday situation. Good luck and thank you.

Burning

I'm burning and I don't know what to do.

It's like people don't even recognize you.

This feeling is so strong all because you've been in a corner for so long.

I seem to be the only one to not need you.

But so many people need to see the truth.

You kept us strong.

When we didn't and refused to move on.

So honestly, here's my thanks to you my friend but man, this list will never end.

First off, you created me to be something like you.

Second off, you let me see what being locked up could really do.

Third off, you showed and let me be the person I am, crazy, outgoing and funny.

Fourth, you let me see when you have faith, it skips numbers five, six, seven, eight.

Ninth off, going back in time. You let me realize and start appreciating you.

That's the truth. I'm still burning and don't know what to do.

Maybe, I should put it out with water or wood or leave it burning the way it should.

Do you know who I'm talking about?

It's God in heaven. Please hear me out.

-Wilheasha

From The Beat: Yes, it is good to feel the fire in the belly and realize the potential of our existence. Don't put it out. Listen to your God. Feed this fire and make it good and never take it for granted.

Thank God

If I were given a chance to go back in time, I would. I mean, who wouldn't? I've grown to the point in life where I realized God does everything for a reason.

But, if I could, I would change the first time I smoked weed. If I would have made that one big time, that one life changing decision not to get high, I probably wouldn't be sitting in this cell-pod. I probably would still be a virgin. I know I would be with my family. But I've learned not to take anything back in life because I wouldn't having the loving and supportive friends and family I have now.

But I would love to hold on to the fun and silly memories of being high with my friends and just laughing all my stress off and all the cool friends I made and most of all the things I have learned.

-Vantaza

From The Beat: It is possible to look at our past and to appreciate everything while ending certain actions. Do you think your God wants you to smoke weed? How many of your "friends" would be your friends if you didn't smoke? How many of them would still be your friends if you stopped smoking?

Just Remember, It's a Choice

Things that attracted me to mobbin' were my family and friends because all of my family gangbangers and I was raised into that life. I could have said "no" but I didn't. I believe anyone could say no if they want to.

So to all you little youngsters who are not sure? Just remember it's a choice. It is not easy because you get shot, shot at, jumped, and get into fights, and even get snaked, but that is not an excuse because you should always be on point.

-Glumer

From The Beat: Continue to stay on point and to bring light to young boys that have their lives mixed up in gang life.

My Dad, My Uncle and Now Me

I think the only reason why I really started banging was because I was raised around it all my life. I always seen my dad doing that stuff and if it wasn't my dad, it was my uncles. I remember going to house party's with my dad and seeing him handle his business. I think that's why I am the way I am because I seen my dad fight a lot. The words I remember the most from my dad were "always keep your head up and never be scared". I still remember that like it was yesterday.

Now my dad's in prison because of his gang banging and taking care of his business. He's been in there for almost seven years and he has ten more years to go. But like I always say, "That's his fault" Ha, Ha. But when he gets out I'm going to fight my Dad for leaving me out here. Screw my Dad.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: We hope that you are able to keep your head up and out of gang life. No child should ever have to be subjected to that kind of life.

Life As A Teenage Mother!

Here I am sitting in Juvenile Hall, wondering what's going on with my baby. How's he doing? When am I going home? Here I sit suffering the consequences for my actions. Mad because I feel I shouldn't be here but my actions placed me here.

Now I'm thinking if I can go back I would have never did what I did so I can be home with my baby and be a better mother. I can't wait to get home to my baby and start living my life right.

-Tawajanae

From The Beat: We thank you for sharing and there isn't much we can say other than; we hope you can get back to your baby soon. Good luck.

For My Mom

I love my mom. She helps me a lot when I'm in a bad mood. She talks to me and explains about why I'm mad. She takes me to the mall- Abercrombie. We go to get Starbucks-Vanilla Bean.

My mom takes care of my brother "Lucky." He was born on a Lucky day. When I get out, I will go take pictures with mom at Fashion Fair and go to the park and play basketball.

I want to say "Thank you to my mom-for loving me, for being there for me even though she works two jobs. qMy mom works at Macy's and so does my aunt.

I have been getting good grades in my classes- A's, B's and I hope my mom is proud of me for that.

-Christy

From The Beat: Well that's very nice that you are so appreciative of your mother. Your mother obviously cares about you and works hard to support you. It's good you get good grades in you class but if you really want to show your gratitude to your mother then we think you should do everything you can to stay out of Juvenile Hall.

This Is Zoo

Being here is like I am at the zoo. People have to tell me what to do but I have to do it. Life is hard. Mom on drugs. People keep hurting me. Love is crazy but when I get out I am the best I can be.

-Jesse

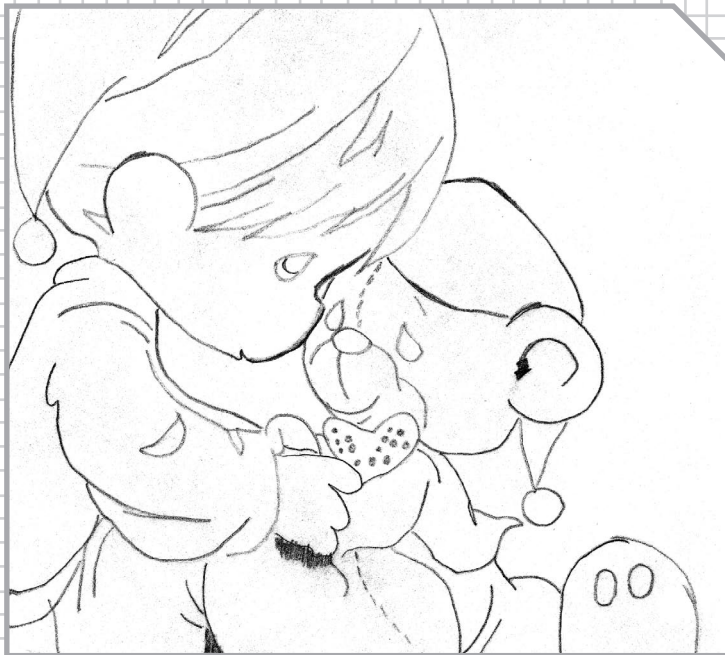
From The Beat: Hey, thanks for sharing your thoughts. It sucks being locked up but we gotta look at our situation and see what we did and what we shouldn't do. Our life isn't going to change just because we say so.

A Place for Us

There is a place. It's big and purple with white windows. It has 5 rooms. One for me and one for my sister. My room is purple and my sisters' room is yellow. That's her favorite color. This a new place we have never been before and life will be different there. It's not perfect but it's nice and we live together. It's two stories high with a white picket fence and we are happy.

-Maria

From The Beat: That sounds very nice. We hope that some day you can find a nice place to live with your sister.



Life With No Regrets

I live life with no regrets because what you do you can't take back.

Let's say you commit a crime and you get locked up and get one year. There's nothing you can say or do because there is no time machine. So that's why I would squad up and keep moving. I can't tell everyone what to do, but here's some advice, take it or leave it, doesn't matter to me how you live your life, it's your destination.

-Mike

From The Beat: Have you ever thought about the consequences of your actions? Say for example, you know that what you're about to do could lead to something bad—will you still do it? If you think things through carefully before doing it, then you won't need a time machine to go back and fix it.

I Made It

If I would ever end up changing my life, for the better, I would never forget the struggles I've been through, or the life I came from. And I would never think that I'm better than someone that was like me because I would know that one day I was once like them.

The reason I would never forget my old memories is because, everyday when I wake up, I could look back and say, "I made it."

-Israel

From The Beat: And you will! Years from now, you will wake up, look back on your youth, think about all the challenges you faced and the struggles you overcame. And you will tell yourself, Israel, exactly what you say here, that you made it.

Live With What You Got

Hey readers, this is my story...before you think of doing the wrong thing, think again. Juvenile hall will be coming your way. I have been in and out. It's not fun but it's just what happens. First, I was here for battery then I joined JDC. That brought me in here again and again. I come back for smoking herb. Juvenile hall says its the devil or it controls your mind but that's a lie. It's worse. I am only 15 years old and I have been smoking since I was a very young teen....

It is so stupid because I am so young and I can't stop at all. Every time I see it, I smoke it. Weed can take away a lot of things from your life. So, that's what brings you in here. A lot of people think it's so cool to be locked up but once they get here, they see that it's not cool. Most people in JJC don't graduate with their friends from regular school.

You can't see all your family or watch your baby cousins, brothers, sisters or your own kids grow up. So, I say live with what you have, family, friends, great food, a home and a school that you can graduate from. Get a great job and be happy. Live your life and try to do better than before.

-Katrina

From The Beat: Weed takes us down an empty road of wasted time. We'll never get that back and time is all life is. Think of how many people have been arrested just because of a little weed. Respect the power that little smoke owns. There are many groups you can utilize during the process of kicking the emotional dependence on it.

Being Jailed Up Is Cool

What's up Beat Within? Well, today I went to court and guess what? I have to go back this month. I really hope I get released but if I don't, that's cool. Well I didn't really feel like writing today. Well until next time Beat.

-Adriana

From The Beat: It's one thing to be accepting of events in life. It's another thing to not be invested at all. You have to take a stand for yourself before anyone else will. We don't think it is cool to be locked up and we would do everything we can to get out and if we didn't we would care about that. What's up? Why would chilling in JJC be acceptable?

I Worry

I am worrying about when I get to go home and see my family. I hope I get out soon. I want to be with my family on Christmas. I don't want to be in here. I am just thinking, when am I going to go home and be with my family? I do not want to come back to this place. Please, this is not for me.

-Aurora

From The Beat: That is unfortunate thing about being locked up; we do not have any say about when we can go. We only have control over the actions that preceded us getting locked up and we have control over the actions we take when we are locked up.

I Want To Change

I want to change,
yes I do want to change
a lot

just so I can get a job and won't be broke
all the time like how I am right now.

-Tony

From The Beat: We hope you take the steps to bring about the change you want. When you get out, what will you do to get a job?

Locked Up

I didn't think that I was going to get locked up, but I think that things happen for a reason.

-Dtoniel

From The Beat: You are right, perhaps the time being locked up has forced you to reflect on your choices and why you are here.

This Life

They think they know the life of a gangster but they don't know shssss.

This life is forever or it is death.

I believe once a gang banger, always a gang banger,
your enemies are always enemies.

If you come to my hood, never look back because I'll be right there.

-Gobblin

From The Beat: This mentality makes us very sad because this is not a hopeful future.

Why I Do It

Gang banging for me is like whatever. I do it for a reason. That reason is to start my family into that life. It was my homie that helped me get into it.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Gang life can offer you things that you many not have had before, but we would like you to ask yourself, What can it take away that you can't get back?

For Angelica, My Daughter

I love playing with her. When she says "momma" it makes me want more and more to want to raise her. When I look at my daughter, I see me all over again but twice as worse. She trips me out. I shouldn't be here. She's missing me. I hope she never forgets me.

-Juanita

From The Beat: She will never forget you. We never forget our Moms but there are many Moms who are not there for their children and all those children want is their Mommy. She needs you more and more and the older she gets the more she will want to know you. You are more than you know.

Boot Camp

I want to go back to Boot Camp because it is better than J.J.C. Over here, there is nothing to do. It is much better at Boot Camp because we do more and get to go outside (ROP) all day. The staff is gay over there, but it's better than here.

-Chhit

From The Beat: We hope that you don't continue to bounce from institution to institution and are able to use Book Camp to help you to meet your goals.



My Life

My life as a young ninja on these streets is fun me being a big time baller on the streets and some of the people I'm locked up with is fake you know and the only thing I would bring on change in my life is the death of family members-if I had them I would take over the world real spitta lol.

-Real Spitta

From The Beat: We're sorry for the loss of your family members. We wonder if you can imagine how they would advise you to live your life if they could. Would they want more for you as a man than to be a baller on the streets? Would they want you to have a family, kids, a job you like?

First Started Getting in Trouble

If I could go back to the past I will go to when I was in 7th grade because that's when I first started getting in trouble with the law and if that didn't work would just change my life around.

-Change my life

From The Beat: Well you can't actually go back, but you can recognize the person you are, who you were then too—and know that if you want to you can change your life around. We recommend it, the guys we see looking at serious time all wish they could go back...you still have the chance.

Employment

I'm hecca happy I just got a job, the only problem is I got the job but in order to have it I have to start on December 1st--my release day is a week later!

Hopefully my P.O will agree to let me go an extra week early to get this job. I'll know tomorrow if I'm going to make bank when I get out or I'ma be struggling to get a job.

-Remy

From The Beat: Well we saw you on the 9th so we hope they hold that job for you. If not, you got one job, so you'll be able to find another. Good luck, and take care of yourself.

Momma's Boy

My mom is like an angel
She is there when I need her
She still show me love
Even though the way I treated her

I use to talk back
and I never listen
Use to sneak up out the house
When she walked in the kitchen

-Th' Kid

From The Beat: Have you apologized to her? Do you intend to treat her differently? Are you listening to her these days?

Going Back

If I could go back into time, I would go back to 9th grade. The reason I would choose to go back to 9th grade is because that's when I started messing up badly in school and with myself as far as the law is concerned.

I would go back just so I could stay in school and just do my thang yall feel me. 'Cause now I'm trying to catch up because I wasn't doing my thang back then. Well I'm gone.

-The Curb

From The Beat: That's great that you're catching up now. You have a chance to put it all together how you choose...Go for what you dream of, not for what seems easiest or "the way things are."

I Just Wanna Get Out

Man I just want to get out and kick it with my lady and my family. And do right get my life together and try to never come back to the all cause this shhh ain't cool at all.

-Solano

From The Beat: What do you need to do to get your life together? Use your time to make plans you can do one by one when you are released.

Missing Her

I think about her all the time suwup she know what I do, fresh Ima tycoon she been there for me. She show that she love me. I don't get to see her but she write me telling me she miss me.

I wanna cry but tears just don't come out. I wish I could see her. I wish I could hear her. I hope she know I really do miss her.

-Yung Rell

From The Beat: Do you write back to her? She is showing you what a relationship can be like, something it sounds like you appreciate if you miss her so much you feel like crying. As you think about the choices you make in your life, remember how important this is to you.

MURMUR

is my name. I'm locked up, but I will be out soon enough. For those of you that now what a MURMUR is, I love you. And if you don't know then I can tell you. MURMUR is a punk rock. MURMUR is a name you could get used to saying. If you ever meet another person called MURMUR that's my name and they're not a real MUR person. MURMUR is not like any other person you have ever met. MURMUR is loveable, kind, rude, belligerent, soft, smart, and many other things. Murmur is my name and I love you.

-MURMUR

From The Beat: We're going to take your word for it.

What it takes to be Happy

What's cracking Beat. I don't need a lot of money, all I want is my boys loyalty. I don't need no big house fancy cars, and clothes. I rather live in a beat up house in the hood with nothing. It's like they say. If you have all the money or everything you're not happy.

But the people that have nothing are happy. I grew up with my friends. Being with them it taught me you can't trust no one but a few. There's always going to be the fake like there's one person in here aint saying no names. He claims to be so solid talk his stuff. But he be getting punk and making the rest of us look bad you know what I mean? I would never trust him in here or the outs.

But it makes me happy that my mom tells me the boys came by check up on my casa. Like I was saying though loyalty is a big thing to me it don't bother me that what I do can get me killed. I see my other fam or other people they don't got the same thing as me. That's why I live my life and take it day by day.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: Dear Stunkey, all that we can hear that you have is a code of loyalty, and the idea that you don't mind if you get killed for it. We think you could have so much more!! And we don't mean a big house or fancy cars or anything material. We think you could have loyal friends who would never put you in a position that might cost your freedom or life. We don't think it's enough that if you are in prison the guys will check on your house. You deserve a family, a future, the ability to help your community improve their prospects for the future, and the education and opportunities for your kids.

Words in My Mind

"I'm sitting here wondering why you're not here why you're locked up in that jail cell shedding them tears!" I hear those words in my mind and I wonder how many people wonder why. Why I get in trouble, why do I do the things I do.

Why can't I just be the person they thought me out to be? Well the truth is I can't be the person they want me to be. I have to be myself. I make decisions bad or good, but I have to learn from them. There's no way to really answer why. Maybe there is. No one will never really know! Unless I choose to answer why.

-Lil Skittles

From The Beat: We think it can be really helpful for you to write a lot and look at that writing as a mirror to help you see who you are, what's most important to you, what you are passionate about, and all together why you care enough about your life to work on it so you don't have to be locked up.

Fa'amaua'uga

Fa'amaua'uga in Samoan that means pride. Stressing in here because I am wasting my time should have been out on the 15th of November staying till I'm 18 now that's a bummer I will get out soon best believe that gonna do better so I don't come back To the Tawas and Uzo yo stay up because I will I won't give up thanks to Fa'e and Teme Mea Mea helping me I will gladly be out and be free Sometimes I wonder what's life about just do me and not sit and pout I want to get out and do great things get recognized like I have super-bowl rings Troy Palamalu Jr. yep that's me hitting hard and smacking straight like a "G" Football, college ball, great job, lovely life sharing the world with my future wife Teme Mea Mea yea that's her My life goes by in a blur, Tell me pride is it good to have being straight stay Malosi and don't do bad.

-Sean aka The Pacific Islander

From The Beat: Yes we think it is good to have pride, to live in accordance with what you value and cherish in life. Believe in yourself, take care and always try hard.

Recognition

Well in the hall I'd like to acknowledge my peers even though sometimes they're annoying but if you get to know some of them you can hear their mistakes and learn not to do what they did also, they're somewhat knowledgeable on some life issues. I need some advice in my life so I'll take all I can get.

I really don't like it in this place this is my first time in here and I'm hoping I don't come back! I can't guarantee it because I could be caught on some dum shhh or in a fight and be brought back here. "I'm only 15 I got 3 more years, I've been here for 5 months on my first time, the system ain't playing with my crimes."

-Lady Chief

From The Beat: Though we enjoyed meeting you and your participation in the Beat, we think you have a great chance to stay away! Many we know wait until they have no options to regret that they didn't learn from mistakes while they had the chance. There are ways to handle life without fighting...your freedom is worth figuring out what that means in your life.

Return To Yesterday

I don't like thinking of my past because I don't regret anything I been through. All my bad experiences I feel help me learn so much. Only thing I like cherishing of my past is people I love that passed away. Those are the only things I like to magnify from my past.

-Lil Nite

From The Beat: We think learning from the past is healthy. People say those who have passed live within us afterward, in that cherishing.

Back To The Future

If I could go back to the past I would go to 6 grade and stack my money. I would probably be rich by now, and I would pay attention in class so I would be caught up on my credits and be smart.

-L

From The Beat: You're not supposed to have to worry about money in sixth grade. You need to just be about your education then, and have adults helping to take care of you so you can focus on learning about life. Work hard in school now and catch up!

Here

Well I got court in the first and the PO is recommending 365 in Fouts. We need to get better financing and hopefully Obama helps out the immigrants like some family members. I need to get the hell out of here.

-Juan

From The Beat: We hope you know what's up now and where you will be. We are all looking to Obama for some good ideas- we definitely need them and are ready to help out.

Home Pass

I get my home pass this weekend. I'm finna kick it with my girl and my friends. I'm going to get out in December at the end.

I can't wait until I'm out and get to do whatever I want to do and whenever. I'm going to be on my money game kicking it with my friends at the block. Well I'm out.

-Bay Star

From The Beat: Does that mean you're going to get a job? We wish we were hearing some more positive plans for your life since you're getting out soon. Don't settle for nothing!!

Mind Games

What's up Beat, would I want to return to yesterday? Na I wouldn't I'm glad now my life is now. I might be lock up now, but still I hate the past--I'm not talking about being with the boys I mean past that.

If I even could start over I wouldn't change shhh...I could deal what goes on now. I don't sell drugs. My life is never going to change. Ten years from now I might be in the pin or in the streets. Hope I will have a job. Mom wishing I would stop, but "The streets are calling me."

I like my life I will die for the hood. They say I won't win but I really am. It's like some mind games. Will I see hell or heaven no one knows-do I want to die? "If I die tonight at least I live a life."

-Stunkey

From The Beat: Well we hope you run into something (even meet up hard with yourself) that helps you have a reason to care whether in ten years you're in the pen or the streets. The past doesn't sound like it was great, why not at least try to have a good future? We think you could have love, a family, a job that makes you feel good about yourself and your contribution to the world--and be a good role model of a man for the young ones who don't know why it matters if they live or die or go to the pen. The streets can call all they want, you don't have to answer.

A Who I Be Lil' N-i-t-e

A! A who I be Lil' N-i-t-e do it fully so shhh I be uppity.
 Ayyy! Relentless with so much motivation so I'm not
 hesitating
 to get is so now you all know.
 Cash flow coming is constantly cause I'm always hungry
 So hm! Get off of me.
 I'm something new out doing all of you.
 Lights camera action eyes on me I'm getting at you.
 So what is it and I aint even thizzin.
 Got uh lot reminiscin on me and when I came through
 I'm like uh flew coming through on all of you.
 Allure all the riches and g's in so called wanna be's
 accessories all of the tinier things.
 Go bad and get knock the hell out wit all my diamond
 rings
 stop hold just wanna let you know
 who I be Lil' N-i-t-e yea Ima master piece.
 I'm on uh hype that's gone always keep me ripe
 all night and yeah I'm gone so now you all know.
 A who I be Lil' N-i-t-e bout the money fam r-e-s-p-e-c-t
 me
 a who I be Lil' N-i-t-e bout that action and yeah I condemn
 all you
 haters. a who I be Lil' N-i-t-e well know in the hood so
 yeah
 I'm illustrious. a who I be Lil' N-i-t-e now you know I go
 and I'm so remarkable.

-Lil Nite

From The Beat: This is it right? Your last week. We know you've been working on your freedom and we are wishing the best for you and your future. Check us out at the Beat. Take care of yourself, and make good decisions! Happy holidays!

Mouths Running

What's up Beat this ya boy curious George, holding
 it down at New Found's. I ain't feeling them topics, so
 I'ma write about jail. Every time ninjas come to jail they
 become hard. Jail don't make you hard. Ninjas always
 talking, running they mouth.

You will never see none them ninjas in the hood. They
 aint ready to step off porch and be a big dog. They some
 little ninjas I'm real and ready to get active anytime. But I
 stay smart and get a lot of knowledge from the O.G's.

If you ready to change, you should've never started.
 Always finish the job, don't ever a half job. When shhh get
 hectic, ninjas run and hide. Not me, that's not my job. See
 ya I'm gone!

-Curious George

From The Beat: Why do you care what others say, or do? If you really "stay smart" why are you ready to "get active" anytime? Why are you so ready to lose your freedom? What is it about your life that is worth working for? Maybe you could be a big dog on the streets, and maybe you could go a lot farther than that in life, and not have to lose everything in the process.

My Last Beat

What's good Beat nothing much I get out tomorrow and
 my birthday is the day after. I just wanted to say I think
 this Beat thing is a good way to express yourself.

I get a lot of respect for y'all thanks for being hella
 cool to us I'll keep in touch when I get out. David said I
 could come and work with y'all so I'll see you there if you
 could please send me the Beat. Wish me luck.

-Spanky

From The Beat: Call us! Come check us out! We'd love to see you. Take care of yourself...make good decisions.

Taking Points

I tired of these teachers. I feel like they be holding
 grudges and stuff. I'm always good in class but I got in
 trouble today. I got in trouble because I was holding a lot
 of stuff in.

The teacher makes me mad everyday but I never say
 anything. She always threatening us about taking points.
 A lot of the time she aint even talking to me but it still
 makes me mad. It just gets annoying them always talking
 about points.

-M

From The Beat: It's challenging to discipline a class, or a child positively all the time—rewarding what they do well instead of taking things away. Once you're in the system they're pretty much taking things away, your freedom etc. We understand you're annoyed, try to take the long view and go after your long-term goals ie. your freedom, rather than expressing your frustration right then and risking that freedom.

The Beat Within

What's good Beat? Sometimes I wish I could go back to
 when I was a little kid. Looking back at my life today I
 wish I would of done a lot of things different.

I wish I could go back to the six grade, because that's
 when I started making all my wrong decisions. If I could
 go back I really would make my life better because I
 already know what troubles are ahead. Alright then Beat
 late.

-Josh

From The Beat: What was happening in sixth grade when you started making the wrong decisions. How were you doing in school? Who was supporting you to do your best? We need guidance and support, all of us, at every age...but especially at times when other paths present themselves and we don't have the experience yet to make good decisions.

My Baby

There's nothing I can say or do
 I'd rather spend my time with you.
 Will our lips ever touch?
 Will we ever stand under the same moon
 I grew a heart for you
 It kind of sucks so far
 I wake up every morning confused.
 I go to sleep every night to see people I know
 "I'll stop the world and melt with you"
 I'll run a thousand miles with you
 But I can't even really have you
 The well organized mind looks at death
 As the next great adventure
 This could be our sweet dream
 I wanna know you
 I wanna learn your body
 You can explore my anxious mind
 And in the summer we'll stagger
 And reminisce
 We'll lay under the trees and daydream
 And I'll tell you my most recent philosophies
 We'll make fun of brainwash
 And you could smirk
 And I could smile sinisterly
 And I could wake up next to you
 I'll say I love you
 And I'll truly mean it
 Distance is distance
 But time aint nothing but a clock

-Lizy

From The Beat: There's a lot of interesting ideas in here. We imagine being your friend would never be boring.

Think

Damn, why did I come back
Maybe I shouldn't have been selling crack
Or was it because I was addicted to twelve packs
What ever I did it sure got me back
Right back to Barry J. Nidroff Juvenile Hall
Now I'm here knocking on my door
'Cause I need a head call
Staff won't give me a call
So I walk back down the hall
Yelling who bang!
Acting like a foo'
'Cause that's all there's to do
Bored as hell with nothing to do
What you expect we to do
Think about all the bad stuff I used to do
Well, guess what I do
'Cause that's all I can do
Think about all the bullshhh I used to do
This time I get out I'm gonna do good
I'm gonna go another path
Stop selling crack
Before someone takes my life
'Cause as long as I'm alive I can change my life

-Javan

If I Could

If I could, I would do something good
If I could, I would bring the dead homies back to the 'hood
If I could, I would give my mom the love I should
If I could, take all the enemies out of my territories
If I could, I would change the bad in the world and change it to good
If I could, I would go back and change mistakes, I wish I could
That's what I will do if I could

-Guy

Be With Me

I don't know why you stick around
When he can't give you the love
That you want when you really need it
And know when you sleeping round
Got no time to put it down
'Cause he's too busy with these others
All he's about is stick and move
Not stick around and love you
But baby girl, I can be different
So if you fed up with his stuff
Then I got something for you
I got something to say, so listen
Now he can try to dig wise
With his mouth full of lies
But ain't nothing going to be the truth
And give you the world because
You are the special girl
And that's how much you mean to me
So put that relationship in the past
And the life in the street
And ake my hand and come with me
You should be with me
Baby girl, baby you should be

-Edward

Our next group of writers come out of L.A. County Juvenile Hall. This is the first set of writings with more to come from these young writers. A while back, we had took a trip out to L.A. to do a Beat workshop, and we featured their writing in one issue. Now, a very kind counselor has taken it upon himself to conduct the workshops, type them up, and email them to us. Give these talented writers your attention as they tell you where they're coming from.

Changes

I been strugglin' for a long time
My life has a hard time tryna serve
Hard dimes had me serving hard time
But I still rather hustle
Instead of getting a 9 to 5 for a long time
I thought life was just dope and nines
The big homies messed up my head
And had me doin' dumb crimes
Now I'm their biggest competition now that I'm on my grind
But I'm tired of choppin' rocks, man, I'd rather write rhymes
And do what I gotta do to make my whole 'hood shine
I remember when I was dusty, girls didn't even waste their time
But now that I'm fitted these chicks call me all the time
And my life ain't how it used to be
I remember when some of the Big Homies
Didn't even speak to me
But when you got a gold chain and your pockets thick
Males are just like females they jump on your stick
And I swear this stuff gets me sick
Sometimes I just wanna throw the towel in, and just call it quits.

-Jungle Boy

Love You

Damn, baby girl, I love you
If you could only love me too
Too many haters out there trying to break us through
But no matter what, I'll be there for you
I'll be kissing you good night
Telling you sweet dreams
Because you are the only one kissing me
And whispering to my ear
That's why you are number one in my list!

-Cristiar

Wonderin' Why

I really started out at 12 years old
I keep asking myself why is the world so cold
We never had money go to make it on my own
And you can't help me so just leave me alone
I always had a pencil so I could just write
I hated to come home to hear my mom and dad fight
I always felt like my whole life was doomed
Mom and dad always used to send me to my room
Mom and daddy always used to fight about their kids
We sleeping in the room they used to throw us out our beds
My auntie always use to come to the house screaming
My brothers and sisters didn't have any choice but to smile Because they didn't know how hard it is to be the middle child
It seem like daddy was neglecting me
It seemed like the whole world forgot about me
The "home boys" started encouraging me to drugs
Because I wanted to be a thug
My mom bought a pitcher that said laugh now but cry later But it feels like I got to cry now and cry later
My mom always tried to do what she could
But always thought the way of life is a hood
Now I'm locked up with nobody to blame
And everybody in my family just wants me to change
Mom told me I would never understand until a gun is to my head
I would understand until I end up dead
But what she don't know I been in that position before
And people wonder why I walk around.

-Clifton

Do The Time

Do the time, don't let the time do you
 Because the minute you get off track, dog, you're through
 Do the time, don't let the time do you
 Don't make it another obstacle that you gotta get through

I seen a person get stressed, and wild out
 He started banging his head on the wall 'til he fell and passed out
 I seen people get jumped, and stumped out
 Just because they couldn't close their mouth
 I saw people get beat
 Even the biggest people got released with missing teeth
 And that's why I observe the whole scene
 So I won't become a victim, of a grimy scheme
 I'm a stone to the bone, but I rather be alone
 But I'm still by my boys when it's time to get it on
 But my goal is to get home before my daughter is grown
 I'm trying to do my time, but sometimes it mess with my dome
 So I keep my eyes on the prize and my mind in the zone
 Or I make a pipe, get some weed, get a lighter and get mewed
 So if you get locked up and you gotta do time
 Remember this song and take my advice

-Kay Rock

Life

Life is something it has its frowns, fools, and clowns
 But don't let them put you down because they swim to drown
 Live life, as you want it to be
 And learn from life as from what you see
 And your life will improve a little like me!
 How do you want to live your life?
 Yours truly,

-G.T

Another Day

Another day in this messed up camp
 Another day putting up with this crap
 Another day of three-minute showers
 Another day of these long hours
 Another day with the same old rules
 Another day with these county shoes
 Another day of playing
 Another day of feeling
 Another day on Chinto's chest
 Another day of feeling stress
 Another day of eating nasty food
 Another day with these crazy fools
 Another day, another day
 When will this day ever end?

-Alfredo

GOOFY

Just A Little Bit Of Game

Dear Beat readers:

First off, let me extend to everyone my utmost love and respect. As many of you know, they call me Goofy, and like most readers and writers, I'm also locked behind a door with no way out. I sat on my shack reading everything, from the Ed. Note to the Beat Without, and it trips me out. A lot of pieces say the same thing I was reading back when I was in juvie, just in different words.

I read a lot about how people will change because they're tired of the system. I really hope you do change, because your life can get snatched by the system real quick. They say it's never too late to change, and that's true... if you're out.

Once you catch an "L," you can be the best you can be and abide by the laws all you want, but what good would it do if you have no release date, and will be surrounded by cons and violence the rest of your life? Your smartness and good behavior ain't worth anything then.

I ain't tryin' to put anyone down, I just want everyone to be real with themselves, because in the end, it will only be you going through it behind locked doors. It's every man for himself when push comes to shove, and this game is cold. You either play it or it plays you.

Just take a look at how many lifers there are, or how many are six feet under. I'm currently facing life or the Death Penalty in the federal system, so I consider myself played like a fool. And the worst part is that I'm charged in the Ricco Act. So I'm doin' time for crimes I didn't commit. The system knows that, but still they charge me with them

One of The Beat's most conscientious writers is back. Tragically, this time as an adult facing a possible federal death penalty under the Ricco statute (meaning that he didn't actually have to DO the crime at all). Known as Goofy when he wrote from YGC, Abraham Martinez awaits his life-or-death trial at the Santa Rita Jail, and tries to make our young reader/writers understand how easy it is to run out of chances. Once that time comes, as Goofy writes, "Your smartness and good behavior ain't worth anything then."

for being a part of a gang. It can happen to anyone that claims a set, gang, street, etc. At the moment, a bikers' club is being hit with the Ricco Act, so it doesn't matter whether you claim a color, street, or club.

I'm only 19 years old and might not ever see the streets again. And it's a trip to lose your life this early. But yet, there's too many that do. Think it ain't gonna happen to you? It might not but it can, and that should be enough to make you want to live a different life. There's lifers spitting game at y'all, and it can't get any more real than that... until you're also a lifer, ya dig?

It ain't rocket science. It's common sense. We can always learn from other people because there's always going to be somebody who's been there and done that. The ones in the Adult System have already been through the juvenile system, and we know what it's like to stress off petty crimes. Those are your worst problems at the moment. Then you move up to the Adult System, and whatever you're doing time for becomes your worst problem.

But everyone's luck runs out at some point, and every day we spend locked up, charge it to the game because you won't ever get it back. For those with a release date, just do this time and keep in mind you got yet another opportunity that you shouldn't waste. Might be your last.

Dear Beat

I tripped up on an issue of the mag from my neighbor next door from me. We are in Santa Rita's "hole." I suppose that in the "system's" mind we are doomed, "a threat to the safety and security of the institution." Anyhow, what can ya' do?

So I'm gonna tell ya' about myself. I'm a 29-year-old 2nd term serving my last parole violation. I finally have a discharge date. I will be without supervision for the first time in 10 years. I've been in a revolving door syndrome, courtesy of CDCR, aka, California Department of Corruption and Recidivism.

I've basically lived my life how I've wanted to, and paid the consequences. I make no attempt to preach or suggest. This is just an overview and an insight of someone who doesn't really care and has lived to tell about it.

The spiral down started on a vacation to Santa Barbara. My girlfriend and I took \$10,000 of her trust account on an attempt to relocate from the East Bay. We soon got caught up with enjoying the location and living in hotel rooms. We looked and found coke and smack. The smack was the problem. We ended up blowing \$10k in 30 days. We never once looked for a place to live. When we came back "home" to the East Bay, what was a \$25-a-day habit turned into a \$50-a-day habit. The dope was of a higher quality in Santa Barbara.

We ended up renting an apartment in San Ramon. My girlfriend's benefactor — the person overseeing the trust — noticed that too much money was being spent on unverified "purchases," so she was slapped with an "allowance." Bills, such as rent, electricity, phone, cable TV, etc. were paid directly by the trust. She was limited to \$500 cash each month. We'd burn through that money within a week. That meant that I had to get a job.

I worked as a waiter at a restaurant and made decent money in tips, cash on hand daily, plus my wages. However, this wasn't enough. I'd also "boost" from whatever store I chose. I'd just walk in and walk out with some expensive items. I made no attempt to be sly. I'd just walk in and snatch everything like I owned the joint... one minute or less. I'd rely on the speed and efficiency of my "racket" to pull it off.

I got caught and put on probation, caught again and went to prison. This is where my problems started. You know, my thing was always to stay high. Always. It was like my medicine. I'd get hooked on smack real quick, get sick and tired of being sick and tired, and tired of sticking needles in my arms. I'd always end up at the methadone clinic. At the clinic, I'd buy tranquilizers, Valium, Klonopin, Xanax mainly. You can't get high on smack when on methadone. Well you can, but you have to do A LOT. It's a waste of money to me.

"Tranqs" became my new poison. They put some to sleep, but with me, I'd stay up and on one. I was like drunk without the slur and wobble of alcohol. They are prescribed for "anxiety." I'd go into a store and become a "superthief." Or so I thought. I'd get away with a lot of stuff to sell to my various "fences" but when I got greedy, that's when it seems I'd get caught.

I can run. I mean you have to be in good shape with a set of wheels to run me down. Thinking about it, every time I broke, I've never been rundown. Sometimes though, those "security specialists" would surround me in the store and I'd have to rely on my "mouth piece" to get me out of it. I can talk the devil out of hell, so some of the time they'd let me go and warn me to never come back.

I'm writing about what I've done to get slammed down all the time. I'm not talking about cell living and prison bullshh because most of y'all reading this already know. I sustained 10 parole violations on my 1st term, 8 on my second. I'm maxed out right now. I get out on my discharge date.

What's to happen? I've gotten out, popped a couple of pills and went to fix some smack and overdosed. They had to hit me

Our next writer comes to us from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail in Dublin, Ca. Slyde was introduced to The Beat by a veteran Beat writer (Goofy, whose piece on the previous page). As a first-time writer in The Beat, we would like to give him a warm welcome as he extends his courtesy to all you readers and writers out there. His are dynamic pieces giving us a rundown on his life story. He doesn't sugar coat anything; it's raw, requiring a little censoring on our part... He puts himself out there so y'all might learn from the mistakes he has made. So without further ado, let Slyde take you on his journey, flashing back on his life and where he went wrong.

twice with Narcan to bring me back. Did that stop me? No. I came to the police station with paramedics hovering above me. The police cited me for under the influenced and made me get into the ambulance. I thought I was going back to the can 48 hours after my release. I've always said "out the gate at 8, in the spoon at noon, and on the run at one."

A perfect plan for re-incarceration. I really can't look back and regret because I was doing what I wanted to do at the time. I was having fun and feeling good most of the time. Sure, there are things I wish I didn't do or things I with I did instead. I refuse to dwell on the past because the past is history. I try to maintain a happy-go-lucky outlook at all things to come. I can't drown myself in sorrows of the past.

Getting out without supervision is a situation that I have never dealt with. I hate parole agents. They'd never sweat me big time because I was "small potatoes" to them. I'd talk my way out of as many situations as possible. The compromise was always to get on the "juice, methadone. While on parole, I was not tested for marijuana because it isn't considered a "drug of abuse." I'd stay smoking, taking my methadone, and poppin' pills by the handful, all the while testing clean for parole. I'd be higher than a 747 most of the time. The other option forced upon me was drug programs. I stayed for 12 hours before running form a community program.

When they caught up with me, they threw me in the In Custody Drug Treatment Program, ICDPT. It was supposed to last 60 days. I made it through 25 days before being kicked out.

My opinion is that when a person wants to quit, they will quit. You, they, can put a person in a program for five years, and if they don't want to quit, they will continue to use. The recidivism numbers prove that.

Recidivism... Why does CA have more people on parole than all other 49 states combined? Why does CA have more people doing time for parole violations than all the other 49 states combined? Something to think about.

Well... What's in store for me? Until we meet again, stay strong, keep your head up and don't fall a victim to the system. You know what they say, "Come to California on vacation, go home on probation.

Drug Related

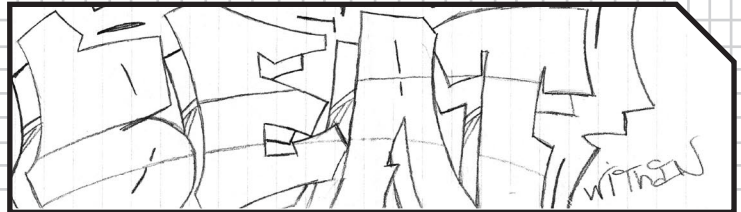
I'll come to you like an affliction
And put you down like an addiction
It's this life that suffocates
And I've sowed the seeds of hate
I turned you on to this life of pain
And it burns like a miss in my vein
But what can I say
I'm wrong anyway
I have never felt so well
While I've never failed to fail
I give and it takes
A life that I forsake
In the time I'm needing you
Is just the time you are bleeding me
Keep choppin' yo' breakfast on a mirror
While the prison bars get nearer

Dear Beat

I haven't had supplies for long time. I ran out. So I haven't written for along time. I have a lot of stuff written but I made too many mistakes. So when I get some paper I'll be sending you some stuff. I really don't like this plain white paper. That's that. I'm sending what's on my mind tonight.

I figured this piece is more psychological or like counseling. My goal is to be smart and wise enough to one-day council people in the free world. I just got the last issue you sent me and I just barely started reading it. I'll keep it short for now.

Our next writer has been consistently dropping pieces day in and day out. He's been sending us so much writing, a lot of his pieces are maybe a couple months old. We have to apologize for that, but we are behind, and are working on a special issue BWO for everybody to soak some game up. The piece, "Trial And Tribulations" is loaded with nothing but knowledge and some real game! He writes to us from Folsom Prison in Represa, CA.



Trial And Tribulations

Many tests come our way as we journey through life. Usually a situation is more than meets the eye. There are many different ways to look at things. We are faced with questions by our parents. And our actions, like everybody says, speak louder than words. My mother and father never took me to get my driver's license because I was a drug addict who couldn't even walk down the street at night without getting a drunk in public ticket.

What does my dad look like putting me on his insurance? My tribulation was to walk the streets instead of drive. I continued to drink and use drugs and complained now and then about not having a license. Who's fault was it? I lost the trial my father and mother held, that decided whether or not they would help me get a license or not. My problem was that I couldn't resist temptation and I always gave in to the urge to party.

Trials come from our desires and temptations. As a Christian I know that God will not tempt me and my belief system establishes my morals and standards. So I know what I believe to be right and wrong. What acceptable and what's not. When I have the urge to do something that I believe is wrong, I got to first look at myself and think why do I want to use these drugs? Is it my desires? I can control that by dealing with the issue. How did the drugs get here? God didn't put these drugs here, so who was it? That other dude?

Satan is always trying to get me to do what is wrong. So I deal with the devil's offer by recognizing it for what it is, temporary fun with consequences. You see how you come out of your trial will affect you in a real way. The trial may not last too long whatever it is, sex, drugs, crime spree, they last a short time but when judgment is not in your favor the effects can last a long time, if they are not permanent. STD's, brain damage, jail time and whatever else you reap from what you sow.

Sometimes it's almost like suffering to say no to drugs. Or sex with your neighbor's wife. You feel like you could be having a lot more fun smoking, or even sweating from sex, but look at the pay off tomorrow. You're still friends with your neighbor and you got more wind on the basketball court with a clear head to think with, if you don't give in.

Don't you see what giving into one little thing like drugs

does? You tell yourself, "it's okay", I can still maintain but after you get going you act a fool and will compromise your whole agenda. It doesn't even have to be drugs. You say we'll just rob one house. Next thing you know you rob one house and get some jewelry and you think, let's get more. The reason why one thing leads to another, selling more drugs, snorting another line, is because the satisfaction is short term. I constantly compare these things to crack because crack highs do not last and they are so desperately chased by the addicted.

Here are the other things you don't benefit from doing the wrong things. Things like murder and rape. These things are labeled wrong because the title appropriately fits. They are wrong. Success takes work. Like I said it's hard to say no to certain things but suffering through peer pressure or resisting that extra pie while standing on the scale at 300 pounds will benefit you later.

Doing things we know are wrong never make us feel good later on. If you have sex with your neighbor's wife, that's losing a trial. It all comes down to choices and completing goals. If you set goals and make the right choices you'll complete them. Completing something is also known as an accomplishment. You can say that committing crimes has accomplished something.

There is no job security in crime. Don't forget one of support systems crime offers is Life support or a hospital bed. Rob the wrong house and it can get you smoked. Another support system crime offers is three meals on a metal tray and a community shower. So when the trials come give the right answers or you'll have nothing to show for your tribulation.

So the trial question is now or later? Either suffer and feel like a lame when you stay at home, and the homies rob houses, or suffer gun shots from a petrified old man or even worse, sit in a jail cell and feel like a lame. Now or later? Now or later?

So why are there trials, why is there conflict, and why can't we all just live in harmony? The devil don't like no one. The devil can't make you do anything, but he can tempt you to do it. I was addicted to drugs and crime and for the longest time. I blamed myself, and God. It was my fault and God only offers solutions. It was the devil putting obstacles in my way. I see it now. I hope you discover what I did: The Blood Of Jesus Christ.

Can You Explain to Me Why?

Can you explain me
 Why life is so hard?
 And explain why
 You can have fun one day and die the next night?
 Can you explain to me
 Why drugs are all over town?
 And explain why
 We come to jail and we get beat down?
 Can you explain to me why
 A girl was promised college, but she got slain?
 Explain why
 They won't put more cops on the streets,
 So the world can change?
 Can you explain to me
 Why lil' girls having sex for money?
 Explain why
 Slim laughing?
 But this is life
 And I don't find nothing funnyq

-Drew

We would like to welcome back our Washington D.C. poets for another stellar output of great writing. As we have mentioned before, these poems were already in a publication called Hear Us Out. We have had the privilege and the permission to now reintroduce them to readers everywhere through The Beat Within. So give it up for these brave young men whose writing proves, yet again, that some of our best young minds are locked behind walls.

My Life In And Out Of Jail

My life outside of the jail
 I felt normal like a normal person
 You think you are so big and bad
 Until you hit the jail
 And it's worse than you expected, you know?
 The jail changes people
 Sometimes it takes one time in jail
 Sometimes maybe more
 To realize it's not a place to be
 Sometimes it takes the time that you serve
 To make you realize what's going on
 When I am released
 I'm still gonna feel like my normal self
 This time, I'm just gonna lay low
 And stay away from the negativity.

-Christian

Who I Am

I am me — athletic and smart
 I come from a place where you go
 And don't want to leave
 (Simple City)
 I stand 5'8, 137 pounds strong
 My face is brown skin
 With a mini goatee
 My hands are as strong as an ox

-C.B.

You Hear Me?

You was hangin' in there with me
 Helpin' me
 Now you gone just like that
 But to a better place
 We was rappin' on the phone
 About how you was out there
 Doin' good
 Had a job, goin' to college
 And stayin' away from the 'hood
 I was encouragin' you
 To keep up the good work
 And stay focused out there
 You was encouragin' me
 You showed me you really cared
 You watched me grow up
 You know I wasn't made to live like this
 Now you gone but not forgotten
 You gone be truly missed
 I guess you can't hear me now
 Just wish I could reach you
 But I don't know how

-C.J.

Confined As A Youth

When you think about childhood
 You 'posed to be able to smile
 But I never in my life was taught how
 I was always around anger that led to pain
 I was always confined
 At least that's how it felt to my brain
 My mixed emotions always caught me by surprise
 When I took seconds to vibe as I looked in my Momma's eyes
 The streets not only took me but they took my mother too
 Confined as a youth, so tell me what I 'posed to do?
 Some people say they love the streets
 Because the game is all they know
 I will never label myself until I give myself time to grow
 My whole life has been based on situations and actions
 But after I go through my situation there's never no relaxing
 And sometimes I wonder why do it always have to be me?
 Then I hear my great grandma's voice saying
 "You wasn't the only one that wasn't free"
 It's crazy how people put lies in our heads
 Trying to get us to believe this is who we are
 When for real every living thing was made to be a star
 I hope one day we will see there's no limit to what we can do
 But until that day comes, we will be here on earth
 Confined as a youth.

-Antwon

Forget

Forget about my old life and the way I was living
 Forget the people I was hanging around
 Forget about how jail had me lost
 But now I've found what I've been looking for
 Now I know my life is worth so much more
 I'm thinking school is the only way out
 Start listening to the words
 That are coming out of wise people's mouths
 How did I change directions so fast?
 I lay back and look how I was destined to crash
 If I can chill and forget about that
 I'll be on my way and I'll be all set

-Sha'kim

*I'm never going to be with the best
 But it really doesn't matter*

Momma Don't Cry: Dedicated To My Mother

The judge left me speechless with nothing to say
 I knew my Momma was gone cry
 When the marshals took me away
 Where's pride as a mother was at low self-esteem
 When the judge stood up and said, "Title 16"
 I should have known one day I'd be regretting my past
 My Momma always said good things in the game don't last
 Now she hurting worse than me, crying over me
 If I don't call, Momma don't get no sleep
 And it hurts to know she's going through all this pain
 Taking her stress out on the glass and the crack cocaine
 Only way I could make it better is if I change
 I don't know about y'all, but I'm tired of the street game
 But I been doing this so long, it's all I know
 I swear I be trying my best to let the fast life go
 But it is calling me, calling me, and do I answer?
 Momma don't cry
 One day it's gone get better
 I promise.

-Antwon

My Family

My sister is like a thunderstorm
 Always throwing down
 Lightning and trees hitting the ground
 Leaves and rain flung all around
 I always get hype when I hear that sound
 It's nothing like family and the love they show
 They'll always be there to watch you grow
 That's why I tell them I love them all
 They'll be right there to pick me up when I fall
 They'll guide me through the dark
 And bring me to the light
 Something that shines so, so bright
 That's why I care for them
 And I'll never stop lovin'.

-Shawn

People Always Told Me

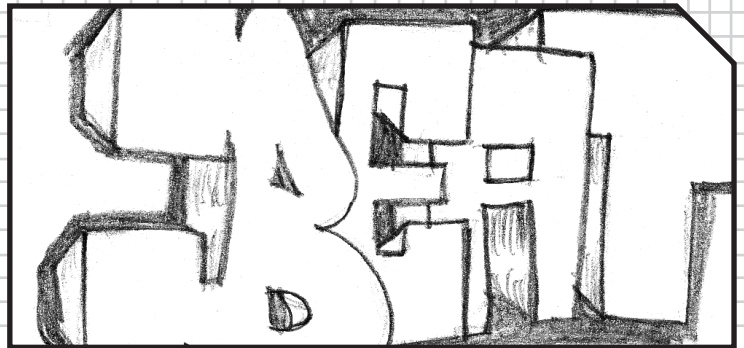
People always told me
 That I'm never going to be anything
 People always told me
 That basketball would never take me anywhere
 But now I'm here to share that I live to play ball
 My heart beats really fast
 Whenever someone tells me
 I'm never going to be with the best
 But it really doesn't matter
 I promise to climb that ladder to success and beat the
 rest
 So all my haters grab a chair and a beer
 'Cause next time ya'll might see me
 I'ma be the star on TV

-D.W

Do the Streets Help?

We put ourselves in a cell-block jungle
 Then turn around and get released with no block
 So we have no choice but to fumble
 Tears in the light is better than anger at night
 Who am I?
 I am a man chasing the light
 I am tired of being confined chasing my own tail
 I am tired of believing in the streets knowing I'm gone
 fail
 It's hard trying to find the way in the dark
 There are only a few dogs you can touch
 And they don't bark
 People try to hide the tears by going under the sheets
 But what happens
 When there's no more hiding and God speaks?
 Understanding the streets is like understanding yourself
 When you alone in your cell going crazy
 Do the streets give you any help?
 When your baby mom's crying because your child needs
 milk
 When you need someone to tell your mother
 Crack's not good for her health
 Do the streets help?
 I ask this question because the streets don't help me
 And there was a time when I thought the streets was my
 destiny
 I love my 'hood and everything in it
 I just don't like the tears and the pain that comes with it
 When I went to court I stood tall by myself
 The judge looked me in my eyes and asked me
 "Do the streets help?"

-Antwon



Lost World

They say the lost world is a place no human can find
 Well I think the lost world
 Is what the death row inmates left behind
 No man has come here without going to jail or prison
 People are lost in their own world
 And don't know what they are missing
 Holding on to a lost gangsta' dream
 Being a gangsta' ain't good as it seem
 Trying to find love in all the wrong places
 Trying to show off
 But for all the wrong faces
 Plus sometimes coldhearted
 Yes, boys and girls
 I don't know why we are switching
 Cause we live in the lost world

-Antwon

People try to hide the tears
by going under the sheets
But what happens
when there's no more hiding
and God speaks?
Understanding the streets
is like understanding yourself
When you alone in your cell going crazy
do the streets give you any help?
When your baby mom's crying
because your child needs milk,
when you need someone to tell your mother
crack's not good for her health
do the streets help?
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read the rest of Antwon's BOW piece on page 47

